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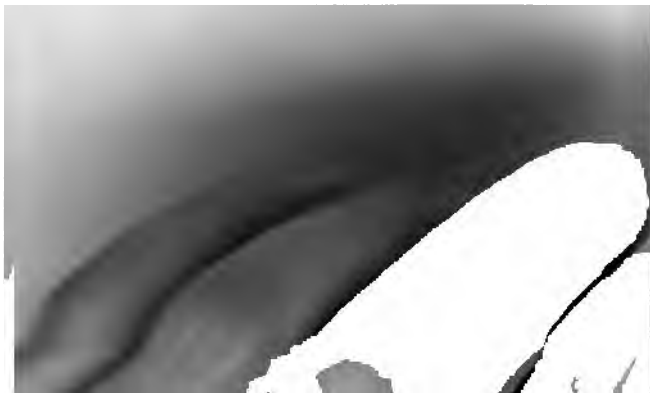
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Rachel at the door of the sick room.—P. 61.

250. m 333.

THE
CHILDREN OF BLESSING.

BY THE AUTHOR OF
"THE FOUR SISTERS,"
ETC. ETC.

Just

"God made us all for good."
KEBLE.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS.



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"Nay, my dear, that stupid girl has not moved it surely. Oh, Miss Beatie, it seems hard to me sometimes not to be able even to cross the floor without assistance."

"Yes, Nurse, it must indeed," said the young lady, coming back from a fruitless search around the room, and putting her hand tenderly in that of the old woman; "I don't know how you bear it. Mamma said, only this morning, Poor, dear Nurse, she used to be the most active person I ever saw, and now to serve God she can only 'stand and wait.'"

"Yes, my dear, and your dear mamma's words remind me that it is wrong to use such a word as hard to the Lord's dealings with me. But it is as she said, I used to be always moving about, never still, except I had one of you as babies in my lap, and even then, if you were easy, I used to be planning things. I would say to myself, 'As soon as ever baby drops off to sleep, I shall count over those socks myself, for I am sure the mistake was Esther's, that was the nursery-maid, you know, my dear;' or 'I must slip down to the dairy to speak about the milk, there has scarcely been a drop of cream on it this week, and how the children are to thrive on that poor stuff I cannot tell;' or I would say to Esther, 'My mind misgives me about the length of Master Arthur's velvet frock; I don't think Mrs. Timmins was half particular about the length of it, and he has grown half an inch in the last three weeks,' for we used to say he grew as fast as the asparagus; or I would be planning where we should walk to next morning, that you might gather rosy-tipped daisies as you called them, for me to stick on thorns for you, or further off in your panniers, that we might find cowslips as sweet

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my prayer-book close at hand. Please read me the evening psalms."

It was a task to which she was well accustomed, and quietly and with reverence Miss Beatie began to read. Before she had finished, the house door opened quickly, and a stout, dark-eyed girl burst into the room. On observing the young lady, she paused for a moment, and dropped a curtesy, but directly afterwards began to bustle about, taking off her hat, and roughly moving things that were in her way. It made no difference, however, to Miss Beatie; except one involuntary glance, when the door burst open, she took no notice of anything but the holy book she held, but read on calmly. As soon as the soft voice ceased, Mrs. Bovill said, "Thank you, my dear," and was going to add something more, when a crash was heard at the other end of the room, and Rachel, who it seemed had been climbing up to reach a high shelf, fell down, chair and all, and after her a box full of various articles. Miss Beatie ran to help her, whilst Mrs. Bovill, helpless, uttered a series of distressed exclamations. "Oh, my workbox! Are you hurt, Rachel? Dear Miss Beatie, you are better to her than she deserves. Oh! that I could but walk across the floor. Alack! alack! let me have patience; but there is my silver thimble under the table, and Master Arthur's hair, and your first tooth, Miss Beatie. Oh, Rachel, Rachel, I think it was an ill hour for me when your father brought you to my doorstep."

Mrs. Bovill's words fell on deaf ears, for Rachel, with no greater injury than a bruised elbow, was sobbing and blubbering as if she had broken her arm, and resisted all *Miss Beatie's* attempts at sympathy. Miss Beatie there-

fore turned aside to pick up the fallen treasures, keeping up, meanwhile, a running fire of comforting remarks. "All right, dear Bovey, the box is not broken, and I do not think anything will be lost. Look, here is your red housewife that you used to let me play with when I was a little girl. I believe I broke the little silver clasp, and here is the yard measure and a bit of wax, and some pictures. I do believe this is the drawing Arthur made one day of you in your spectacles, with a large nose; and here is some hair wrapped up in black-edged paper, did that belong to our angel baby? Ah, yes; and here is that old snuff-box, and your thimble with the holes in it, that I remember Arthur hid inside my large doll, and my patchwork that he once snipped across with his scissors and then was so sorry. See, Bovey, dear, I am sure that I shall find all your treasures." But the energy and even glee with which Miss Beatie carried on the search, was only still more trying to old nurse's patience, which, in truth, had never been very celebrated, and once more she began to scold. "I don't know how you can stand there, Rachel, and see the young lady on her knees, trying to make up for your mischief. Helpless and lazy as you are, I wonder what your mother brought you up for. To be the plague of my old age, I think. Surely I'll send for your father to take you home again."

"The sooner the better for me then," said Rachel, ceasing her sobs, and turning a face of rage towards her grandmother. "I hate being here, I wish I was gone. Plague, indeed; I've plagued out of my life in such a nasty hole as this. No girl would stand it, and I won't, either."

The unrestrained violence and total want of respect

in these words surprised Miss Beatie, who had been brought up in an atmosphere of gentleness, where politeness and soft tones veiled even the haughty and despotic pride of her own father; and going up to Mrs. Bovill, as if to protect her, her large blue eyes gazed on Rachel in astonishment. Then, seeing Mrs. Bovill really grieved, she said, tenderly—

“Do not mind her, dear nurse, she will be sorry soon—Will you not, Rachel? Be comforted, Bovey; she will soon ask you to forgive her.”

“Never will I,” called out Rachel—“that’s for certain; so you may hold your noise, miss, petting her up, as you are, and making her think herself——”

Rachel stopped suddenly. Unseen by any of them, the door had opened, and a tall, farmer-like man had entered with a pleasant smile on his face, and a “How are you, mother?” on his lips; but a glance at the scene before him—his mother’s troubled look, the gentle, graceful young lady guarding her as it were, and Rachel’s passion plain in both her voice and features, changed his words into—“What now, mother, what’s the matter?”

All three started, Rachel most of all.

“Oh, John, is it you?” said the old woman, holding out her hand to him. “I had just been threatening her with her father, and there you are.”

“Threatening her, indeed, so she needs threatening, does she?” said John Bovill, with a sort of smile. “We’ll soon settle that;” and before Rachel had recovered from her surprise he had crossed the room, in a few quick strides, and his heavy stick had fallen upon her.

Miss Beatie turned pale, and held tight by nurse’s hand.

"John," cried the latter, hastily, "I desire you to stop. It is right she should be corrected, but remember the young lady is here ; wait until she has gone ; and I shall be obliged to you if you will look out for her pony."

"Well, mother, just as you please," said Mr. Bovill, coming forward, "and I ask your pardon, Miss, on my daughter's part. I brought her here to be a comfort to my good mother there, and if she hasn't behaved herself, I shall teach her how, that's all."

Miss Beatie seemed about to speak, but, at that moment, the large clock in the corner struck four, and, with a gesture of fear on her own account, she said—

"Oh, Bovey, what shall I do ? I ought to have been at home now ; I must, at least, run away directly ;"

And hastily kissing the old woman, she gathered up her habit, and followed Mr. Bovill to the door. Old Whitaker was already there, watching for her rather anxiously ; but, before she mounted, Miss Beatie turned to John Bovill, who stood respectfully beside her, and, with a very reddening cheek, said—

"Oh, please, Mr. Bovill, do not be angry with Rachel any more. She has had an accident which had made her cross ; she will be sorry now, I think."

"I can't have her annoying my mother," he replied ; "she must be taught better, miss."

"I know," said Miss Beatie. "But, perhaps, if you forgive her it will make her more sorry."

"She's too headstrong for that sort of remedy," said Mr. Bovill, with a sort of pitying laugh ; "however, to please you, Miss, and as to please you is to please my mother I know, I will let her off this time."

"Thank you," said Miss Beatie, gratefully ; and her

sensitive mind relieved from that burden, she set off to meet her own troubles in her own father's inevitable displeasure at her unpunctuality.

It is more than doubtful whether Rachel would have been grateful had she known of the successful intercession of the young lady, for her spirit was rather too proud to be grateful.

It may seem strange to call her proud, for apparently she had little to be proud of. It was not as if, like Miss Beatie, she had been very fair, and, unlike Miss Beatie, had been proud of it ; for Rachel had rather a plain face with a turned-up nose, and a mouth that was always sticking out as if to spite somebody, and except when she smiled, had nothing pleasant about it but her bright dark eyes. Nor was she clever, for she had never learnt to sew with neatness ; she could not read a single verse in her Bible without stumbling before every other word, and miscalling all the longer ones, or Mrs. Bovill would not have been so very glad to have Miss Beatrice to read to her ; nor had Rachel riches nor any possession except her father's honest name to be proud of, and that she never thought about ; and yet she was very proud. Hers was the pride of an untrained spirit, the pride that savages possess, who boast of all they can do, and brook no control. As for the humility that bows before reproof, that confesses when in the wrong, that vaunts not itself, that thinks lowly of its own deeds, the humility that the Bible teaches, which should be so plainly read in every Christian child, that was unknown to Rachel ; and in consequence she had been a torment to her poor grandmother instead of a comfort to her, and this when she had strong hands, quick wits, a cheerful spirit, and all the gifts that

should have made her a staff and prop to the aged woman. It is true that there were excuses for her, in her upbringing. Her mother was very much like Rachel herself, only with her bad qualities grown up, as it were ; and John Bovill was rather a weak man, and only roused up now and then as he had been to-day, and then he was led more by passion than any other guide. To go back still further, Rachel's father had himself been deprived too early of a mother's care. When Mrs. Bovill was left a widow with one little son, she had felt herself compelled to leave him in charge of strangers, and go out into the world to earn a maintenance for him. After some changes, she found herself in a situation for which she was well qualified, that of head-nurse to the young, gentle, delicate Mrs. Beresford's first child. This treasure died, but others were born, and Mrs. Bovill remained to spend all the influence of her really pious mind upon Miss Beatie and her brother. John Bovill was early apprenticed to a carpenter, and in time set up for himself and married. His affection for his mother was strong, yet he had grown up apart from her ; and she could not always shut her eyes to the fact, that in regard to the things she valued most, John was not what she would have desired to see him. Mrs. Bovill stayed on at the Hall, a valued friend, long after the children grew out of the nursery ; but a severe attack of rheumatism depriving her of the power of being useful in the house, she became anxious to move to a little independent home of her own, which Mrs. Beresford procured for her in the rent-free furnished cottage she now occupied. It is true that John had not been backward in asking her to live with him, but a few days' visit to her daughter-in-law con-

vincing Mrs. Bovill that a lonely fireside would be far preferable to one in which self-will and disorder often reigned, she soon came back to Middleton with the intention of living by herself. A second attack of rheumatic fever, however, more severe than the first, left her almost entirely deprived of the use of her limbs, and it was upon her partial recovery from this illness that John had brought his second girl, her god-daughter, to be, as he had, said both hands and feet to her. That was only three months ago ; but three months had been quite enough to fret the grandmother, and to make Rachel more rebellious than ever.

Not that Rachel was full of nothing but faults ; that happily can be said of few, and certainly of no one at the age of fourteen, before time and indulgence in sin have banished the good that has been in them. No ; but Rachel had, like every other Christian child, a strong evil nature warring against her better one ; and she had never been taught even to wish to conquer the evil, let alone the means by which she might hope to do so ; and therefore, albeit she possessed a warm, affectionate heart, an honest and generous disposition, yet her pride and self-will were so great as to overshadow the good part in her. All this might easily be traced in her conduct this afternoon, in her neglect of her grandmother, her staying out gossiping with a daughter of Mrs. Stubbs, her hasty return, the accident, and her rage.

After Miss Beresford left the house, her grandmother had said,—

“Come, Rachel, I dare say, as my dear young lady says, you are sorry, and so we'll say no more about it. Stir up the fire, and let us have some tea.”

But the only answer Rachel made, was to take the kettle off until she had stirred the fire, to bang the poker on the fender with a rattle that shook the tongs and made pussy set her back up, and then to disappear upstairs. Hence, when her father re-entered the house, no Rachel was to be seen. He scarcely seemed to notice this, however; but drawing a chair up to the fire, said,—

“Well, mother, and how are you getting on? You look a deal better than you did six weeks ago.”

“Thank God, John, I am a great deal better in myself,” replied Mrs. Bovill; “and as for this affliction in my limbs, if it is to last, I must make up my mind to it, and be contented, which I hope every day sees me nearer to. How are Sarah and the children?”

“Thank you, Sarah’s hearty; so is the little one. Job and William both have hooping-cough, but are taking it well, and Sally is talking of going out to service.”

“Then you will be wanting Rachel back, I reckon,” said his mother.

“Nay, I don’t know,” answered John. “Sarah did say that if Sally went out, she’d be wanting one of them at home; but I don’t myself matter Sally’s going to the place she’s after, which is in a drapery establishment at Carlington; and as for Rachel, I never could see she was much use at home, and always falling out with Sally; only if she is the same with you, perhaps you are tired of her; so suit yourself, mother, only remember, I’m best pleased for her to be here.”

“Well, John,” replied his mother, “it stands thus in my mind. I can do nothing to help myself, so I must have somebody, and my own flesh and blood are the

nearest to me. That Rachel is trying, I will not deny ; and all the more that she makes me very sharp with her when I ought to have learnt to be patient ; and, John, you must allow me to say that she has not been brought up as she ought to have been, in the matter of working properly, I mean. If it is only in scouring the floor, she slops about, and scarcely lays a hand on to take the grease and dirt away ; and she can't dust an article of furniture without leaving a mark round where her cloth has been. If I set her to clean the window, there is a dirty corner in every pane. She never puts a thing down plumb as I say, so the room has always an untidy look ; and as for cooking, she lets the potatoes burn, and the bread is as heavy as lead."

"Well, mother, Rachel had better go home with me, and take her character with her, that's plain," said John, a good deal nettled—what father likes his children to be complained of? "so she may pack up immediately."

"I am only mentioning these things, John," said his mother, in rather a soothing way, "that little Margaret may be taught better ways if possible ; for they never can get good situations, nor will they make good wives, if their habits are such as these ; but, John, what I have named about Rachel, that is, her rough ways and want of cleanliness, that is not what I complain of most in her ; it is that she can't improve, because she has not a mind to be taught. She won't bear telling, nor will she submit to obey me in anything unless she just chooses it herself ; and I will tell you the reason of it all, it is that she has got no religion in her, John."

"Why, mother," replied her son, with an uncomfortable laugh, "you can't expect a girl of fourteen to be as serious

as a parson ; and I must say, myself, I don't see how religion is to teach her to boil potatoes."

"John, honey, it is the root of all things, the beginning and the end," said his mother, solemnly. "Do our duty towards God, and we are in the right way to do our duty towards our neighbour ; for the one thing hangs upon the other. You see it is in this way ; if Rachel had been brought up in tidy habits, and taught to do as she was bid, she would have been a greater help to me ; and that, if you will excuse me, is not her own fault, so much as those who have not known their own duty so well as to teach her ; but still her proud temper would have been the same without religion, for it is that alone that can teach the heart, out of which all good things spring."

"Well, mother," said John, rising, "it is plain, as I said before, without these reflections on the absent, that you and Rachel can't agree, so she had best pack up, and go back to them as cannot teach her, not knowing anything themselves."

"Now John, honey, please don't fly off that way," said his mother, looking quite distressed. "I wouldn't have said all this, but being your mother, I wanted to set my notion of things plainly before you, for the good of the younger children ; and as for Rachel, if you are willing to spare her to me, I should like her to stay. I shall try to be more patient with her, and perhaps she may improve ; and if she does, what I have shall mostly be hers, for I do not forget she is my godchild, and it may not be long, only you must not feel offended at what I have said. You know, John, an old woman that has lived through one world, and is near to the next, is most likely to know which is most worth thinking about ; and, take

my word for it, John, that whether we're children or grown-up, there is nothing but being good and humble, and trying to do everything that helps to make us more so, through Jesus Christ our Saviour, that can make us happy in this world, or ready for the next. But here is Rachel coming down, so we'll have tea, and if you please, John, no more about what is past."

John Bovill was only too well pleased that the subject should be dropped. To speak about the importance of religion only made him uneasy, because he knew that although he went to church, and on the whole guided himself and his children by what he heard there, still that it had no close place in his heart, and he knew also that it ought to have; and as for Rachel's behaviour this afternoon, he had got over his first anger, and cared not to say more about it; so when her rosy face appeared through the staircase door with a sort of "don't care what's coming" look upon it, he only greeted her with "Now, my girl, stir yourself; grandmother's going to give me a cup of tea, and then I must be off again; train leaves Spotton at half-past six."

More relieved than she would have allowed at the blowing over of the storm, and her own ill-humour being worn away, Rachel, now full of importance, bustled about in her own awkward way, and soon had tea set out after a fashion that she thought very fine, and which she never guessed contrasted sadly in her grandmother's mind with the spotless neatness and almost luxury of the nursery appointments at the Hall. The father, however, thought she had managed very well, and that his mother was uncommonly particular and fidgety, as old folks mostly were, but he said nothing, and the meal passed

cozily. They had sat some time talking after it, and Rachel had never offered to move the things ; but nobody noticed it until John Bovill happened to set his elbow down upon his cup and saucer in the energy of talking, and this reminded her grandmother to tell Rachel she'd better be clearing away. It was a simple order, but somehow or other it did not suit Miss Rachel, so she tossed her head saucily, and said in the pertest way, "Nay, grandmother, I'se going to leave them till after father's gone."

What was her surprise to hear her father take it up, and in quite a stern tone say, "Rachel, my girl, just listen to me. If that's the way you answer your grandmother when she tells you anything, it won't do. It is not what I've taught you, and I won't have it. I shall be over again probably in the course of about three weeks or so, and if I find you haven't been behaving yourself, and minding what grandmother says to you, I shall make you remember it as I have never done before ; and I wonder you're not ashamed when you were placed here to be of use to her, and she so ill, to go and be so contrary ; but mark my words, it shall be worse for you, if you don't amend."

I suppose John Bovill had never made so long a speech to one of his children in his life before, and the effect was great. His mother took off her spectacles and wiped her eyes ; she did not much like anyone to find fault with Rachel, except herself, but she was pleased with the way John spoke, whilst he himself was highly gratified. The least pleased was, probably, Rachel ; her mouth stuck out worse than ever, and she sat a moment or two to prove her independence, before she finally removed the tea-things. Then John and his mother talked about the

other children ; how Isaac, the eldest boy, wanted to be put apprentice to a shoemaker, and whether it was a likely trade for him ; and how John was expecting a very good job in the neighbouring town, with a new market-house they were going to build, which made Mrs. Bovill fall into stories of John's father, who had followed the same trade, and who had died from the effects of a fall from the scaffolding inside a tower, until it was time for John to start off to the station. As he was bidding his mother "good-bye," Rachel appeared with her hat on ; "I am going to set you, father."

"I think not, my girl," was his reply, not ill-pleased, however, at her wishing it. "These dark nights out by yourself coming back. No, no, Rachel, that would never do."

"I'll get Esther Stubbs to come and meet me ; she can go out when and where she likes."

"All the more reason why you shouldn't be out with her," said John. "No, no, stop at home with your grandmother ; and remember I leave her in your charge, and I hope you will be a faithful child to her, and here is half-a-crown for you to do what you like with, for I see you must please yourself in some things, or you will not be contented, and so now good-bye."

Rachel stood at the open door for some time after her father had gone, although it was too dark to watch his progress ; but she thought of the children at home that she had not seen these thirteen weeks, and particularly of the baby who had been born since she came away, and of Sally who was at least so kind at times, and she had some trouble to keep from crying ; but there was the honest pride of feeling that her father had, as it were,

trusted her, and there was the possession of the half-crown to comfort her, so at last she deposited that precious coin at the bottom of her pocket, banged the door to after her, and returned to her grandmother. Little did she understand how much at that time and afterwards, when she was hanging about the fireside, listening to stories of old times, there always was to fidget the old woman. To Mrs. Bovill's particular eyes, there was not a corner of the room, nor an article in it, so straight and clean as she would have liked to see it. Drops of grease disfigured the floor, young cobwebs lurked in the joining of the large beam with the ceiling, many a bit of dust rested on the furniture, the cupboard door stood ajar, and a line of small coals marked the passage of the scuttle, and the flickering firelight only seemed to shew these things more plainly. Near at hand, too, was but a dirty tea-table, and in the dull candlestick was a yet unlighted candle, all leaning to one side, with the paper that was intended to prop it up, standing out untidily.

All little things, you will say; but all affecting the general appearance of the house, and the comfort of a person who had been accustomed to live so differently. But Mrs. Bovill had taken to herself a lesson of forbearance this afternoon; she felt that she had, perhaps, been too exacting with her grand-daughter; perhaps she had spoken out too much to John—at any rate, knowing her own temper, she would try if a little more gentleness with Rachel might not have some good effect. And however little Rachel knew or cared about this, she could scarcely fail to be touched by her grandmother's kind manner; and the next day, Saturday, the day on which

even she allowed there should be some cleaning up, she set to work with a little more care, and not quite such a tendency to rebel against the least direction or advice as usual.

But her work received an unexpected interruption. She was in the midst of what might be called a scuffle with the furniture, and a dust was already raised, when a visitor appeared. It was Esther Stubbs, the young woman who has been already spoken of. She came in very quietly, for here the village people were all respectful to Mrs. Bovill ; she was considered superior, and Miss Beresford came to see her. " Good morning, Mrs. Bovill," said she, " how is your rheumatiz this morning? Mother sent to see if Rachel could go with us to Slapton. We're going to market, and Rachel was saying she wanted a few things."

" Dear me," said Rachel, before her grandmother could speak, " and I've only just begun cleaning up."

" You'd side all the things in a minute," said Esther, looking round at the confusion, " and perhaps your grandmother wouldn't mind your cleaning Monday instead. You have never been to Slapton, you know."

" Can't you wait a bit?" asked Rachel, ruefully.

" Nay, we're too late a'most already," replied Esther. " I just slipped down to tell you we should call for you in ten minutes or so."

" Then your mother's going with you?" said Mrs. Bovill.

" Yes, to be sure," answered Esther, with a laugh that seemed quite unnecessary.

Mrs. Bovill felt somehow distrustful of Esther, but she had seen Rachel's face light up with the idea of going,

and then fall again, and she wanted to be kind to her, so she said, "You will not stay late, Esther, will you?"

"We shall be back by two or three; sooner, if we can get a ride with Chapman's," answered Esther, readily. "Our Bessy can come in and stir you the fire, and get you anything you want."

"I am much obliged to you, Esther Stubbs, and if Bessy will come in about twelve o'clock, I shall be glad to see her. So Rachel, my dear, you may go. We do want some coffee, and that worsted matching. Crabtree is out of it. Your mother will show her the shops to go to, Esther."

But Esther was off; she had disappeared directly Mrs. Bovill gave her consent, after giving Rachel a sort of wink, and bidding her make haste. Rachel did not comprehend the wink, but she lost no time in restoring some order to the room, then ran upstairs, and in a very short time came back with clean hands and face, dressed in her Sunday clothes, and looking very bright and happy. "Now, grandmother, what about your dinner? Shall I set it out for you to be ready? Or shall I leave it here, and Bessy can get it fresh out of the cupboard, for fear pussy might like a bit before her time? You can't have any potatoes, but I can boil some for supper, can't I? And, grandmother, what must I get, think ye, with my half-crown? I can wear it nicely to-day."

Grandmother was only too well pleased to see the child so gleeful, with such a different countenance from the one she generally wore. Her dinner was soon settled, and then she gave all her attention to the "wearing" or spending of the half-crown. It was not an easy matter; there were *things* Rachel wanted that would cost more,

and little things that it would be a pity to break it for. In the end they fixed upon a pair of gloves, and to keep the rest for future needs. Then Rachel received numerous directions about her purchases, and about keeping close to Mrs. Stubbs, all which she took in great good humour, and had put stick, and poker, and tongs, and knitting, and prayer-book, all within reach of her grandmother, before the door burst open, and Esther, a good deal finer than she was before, popped her head in, and said, "Are you ready, Rachel? Mother's gone on before."

"Run away then, Rachel," cried Mrs. Bovill, quite in a fuss herself, "and mind whatever you do, you don't lose sight of her, or no knowing what might happen to you." But the caution fell on empty air, for long before Mrs. Bovill had finished speaking, Rachel and her companion had left the house.

"There now," Esther had exclaimed as soon as they had shut the door, "haven't I got you out finely? Come along," and Rachel had laughed from pleasure without noticing the drift of Esther's speech.

They walked very fast through the keen, frosty air, and had soon turned into the long lane which the guide-post said would take them to Slapton, a distance of about two miles and a half.

"Where's your mother?" asked Rachel, looking up the lane as far as she could see.

"Mother," said Esther; "she's out charring at Major Walker's. She don't often go out that way; but they've had a flare-up among the servants, and mother lived laundry-maid at Mrs. Walker's mother, so she went to help them. It was in this way: Thomas, that's the man servant, he——"

"What do you mean, Esther?" cried Rachel, stopping with a face as red as fire. "Isn't your mother going with us?"

"No, to be sure, she isn't," said Esther, bursting into a loud laugh, and clapping her hands at Rachel's consternation.

"What did you tell such a great, big lie for then?" said Rachel, in a fury.

"'Cause I knew your grandmother wouldn't let you go with only me, and I wanted to give you a piece of pleasuring," answered Esther, coolly.

"Then you might have taken some other way of doing it," said Rachel. "It's a mean trick, Esther, and I shall go back again."

"So this is your thanks," said Esther, sneering. "Well, I didn't think, Rachel Bovill, that you had such a poor spirit. But, maybe, it's only natural. They do say you are very tight kept, and, I suppose, granny will do something bad to you."

"There was no need to tell lies about it, Esther," said Rachel. "It isn't that I mind grandmother, but I can't abide such meanness."

"Well, I never," continued her tempter. "So you would give up spending your money, and seeing the shows: for it's hiring-day, and there'll be people from all parts, and we can just go about as we like, and there'll be all the fashions. You've no idea what they are, and the bonnets such days as this; and all because you think grandmother will be vexed because the poor little thing has got nobody but me to take care of her."

Rachel had set her face towards home at first, but whilst Esther was talking she had gradually turned round

again, and in spite of her indignation at her companion's falsehood, the strong wish to have her outing and to prove her independence of her grandmother, made her yield bit by bit ; and at last, when Esther said roughly but good humouredly, "Come along, or we shall lose half the fun," she gave way altogether and followed her. She was still, however, vexed with Esther, and returned such sulky answers that Esther gave up speaking ; and they trudged along in silence, until a little further on Esther exclaimed,—

"Eh, look, Rachel, here is miss from the hall. What a lovely petticoat she has on ; bright as holly berries, and edged with black velvet. I wish I was a lady."

These words made Rachel raise her head, and she saw Miss Beatie not far off, plainly dressed enough for her country walk ; but her looped-up dress showing the gay petticoat which thus excited Esther's ambition. There was a tall, kind-looking lady with her, her governess, and they were walking at such a brisk pace that it was not many minutes before they came close up to them. Esther's eyes were still enviously fixed upon the petticoat, when, as the ladies passed, Miss Beatie said to her companion,—

"Oh, Miss Young, I believe that is Nurse's granddaughter. I should like to ask how she is this morning. May I not ?"

And Rachel, attracted by the words, stopped too ; and although her independence would have fain omitted the usual mark of respect, the habit was too strong for her will, and she curtsied.

"How is your grandmother this morning, Rachel ?"

"She's middling, thank you, ma'am. She said she had a deal of pain last night."

Miss Beatie hesitated. She did not want to be inquisitive ; but a misgiving about the dear old woman's comfort encouraged her, and her next questions drew out the information that Mrs. Bovill was alone, and dependent upon chance help.

"What shall we do?" said Miss Beatie, turning to her governess. "I cannot go to her, and yet she ought not to be left quite alone—poor, dear Bovey."

"We can make some better arrangement, I dare say, my love," said the governess, "when we reach the village. Where does this Bessy Stubbs live?"

"Last house, mum, left hand, with a stone seat at one side of the door," answered Esther, glibly.

And after a few words together, the ladies walked on, and the girls proceeded still more quickly on their way. Rachel more uncomfortable than ever, for Miss Beatie would be sure to betray that Mrs. Stubbs was not with them ; and although Rachel never meant to keep it from her grandmother, she did not want it to come out so.

However, her thoughts were soon diverted by the bustle they were getting into. Carts and vehicles of all sorts began to throng the road, and foot-passengers like themselves. Sooner than she expected, they reached the entrance to the town. A few way-side villas first, and then a rather quiet street, with only private houses in it, but in the next were many shops, and the very first, with two large plate-glass windows filled with every novelty in the shape of woman's dress, was quite attractive enough to check their footsteps.

"See, Esther," cried Rachel, "there's a great tiger."

"A what," said Esther, "got out of the wild-beast show, do you mean?"

"No, on that hearthrug. It does look almost wicked indeed."

"Oh, that's all," said Esther with some contempt as she followed Rachel's eyes, and saw the gaudy rug that dangled between two crinolines above the door. "I was looking at these bonnets. Did you ever see such a beauty as that fancy straw trimmed with sky-blue and that *lalach*? I am sure I don't know which I'd choose. I'm very fond of *lalach*, and with a white rose in it, too. Oh lawk, and that must be for a wedding under that glass case, see. Eh, but they have nice things at this shop; and cheap, too. There's a print marked only 5d.

"5 $\frac{3}{4}$ d. it is," said Rachel, who was nearer to it.

"So it is. How they do cheat. Any one might have thought it was only 5d. But it is much convenienter than going in to price them. Just do look at that Paisley shawl. I want mother to buy me one like that, I go shabbier than any girl in Middleton. I've a good mind to get it, and pay bit by bit. They do that at some shops, I know. Let's go in; you want something, don't you, Rachel?"

"I'm going to get a pair of woollen gloves, but this is such a big place for them, Esther."

"Tut, child, never heed that. Let's go in and ask for them as bold as brass. Folks always minds them most that makes most of themselves."

With such a foolish sentiment upon her lips, Esther's appearance was not likely to be very modest, and as she entered the shop, a respectable farmer's wife, who was making some purchases near the entrance, and who knew most of the people in Middleton, said to her companion, "I believe that is one of the village girls. Yes, I know

her face quite well, and a rude, bold one it is. I wonder Mrs. Bovill will allow her granddaughter to be with her."

Esther, however, was quite unconscious of the remark, and she walked forward into the middle of the shop, quite surprised to find that her manner seemed to have no effect upon either master or his apprentices, who were indeed all occupied with the customers that lined the counters, and had no time to spare for strangers. At first, however, there was amusement enough for both Esther and Rachel in watching the traffic that was going on; and after a time they succeeded in forcing their way into the line of customers. There, one good lady was occupied in choosing calico. She rubbed it between her finger and thumb, and held first one piece up to the light, and then another, looking vastly discontented with both price and quality; and whilst she was balancing the merits of two kinds, both very dear in her opinion, the apprentice turned to Esther and said,—

"Any one serving you, Miss?"

"No," replied Esther, with what she meant to be a grand air. "This young woman wants some woollen gloves, if you please."

The apprentice glanced for one moment rather superciliously at the short sized Rachel, then hastily called to one of his fellows already quite engaged, "Robinson, winter gloves here," and without another thought of the young girls, returned to his more important customer.

"You'll not find a better article than this for the money, mum. Horrocks's manufacture; these calicos were bought by us at a great loss, only last week."

Esther turned to the other side, but here was an over

grown country youth, who was apparently having the cloth for his first tail-coat chosen for him by his mother.

"Is it for this gentleman?" ma'am, the polite attendant was saying. "Then I should recommend that cloth, it is the best for wearing. Mine is made of the same piece."

The anxious faces of both mother and son turned towards the apprentice, as he complacently pulled at the collar of his own stylish garment. "It is all the fashion, is this cloth," said he.

No time for selling woollen gloves in that quarter either it appeared.

"Let's be off," said Esther; "there are plenty more shops where they'll be glad to serve us."

Esther little thought that the master of the shop had had his eye on her from the moment of her entering, and had said to himself, "That is one of those bold-looking young women that are likely enough to carry off a silk handkerchief or two, such as we lost last hiring-day;" but still a good deal chafed by their ill-success in this fine place, the two girls proceeded down the street. It became more and more crowded as they approached the end of it, which was in fact quite blocked up by the number of men and women who were standing there, for this was one of the few towns where the strange custom still remains of servants standing in the open air for the purpose of being hired.

The street opened into a large market square, which was the great centre of all the traffic of the day. There were booths, or stalls as they were called, filled with different wares, sweets, penny toys, shoes, caps, tins, cloth, quack medicines, baskets, and fifty other things; spread

upon the ground was a variety of pottery, presided over by gipsy-looking people, whilst some parts were specially devoted to the sale of fish, and corn, and vegetables, and butchers' meat. All this Rachel could not see over the heads of the people who surrounded her, but she could hear the confused murmur of voices that all the buying and selling and chaffering caused; and there were, beside, two shows, each with its band of music, drums beating, and cymbals clattering; and there was a merry-go-round with tingling bells, and a rifle gallery giving its strong, fidgetting pops at intervals; and near at hand, there was what was called a "cheap John,"—a man standing in front of a caravan loaded with the most varied commodities, which he continually commended by a string of nonsense,—

"Walk up, walk up, ladies and gentlemen, and see the live lion stuffed with straw, and the sharpest knives Sheffield ever furnished," &c.

But this noise was, except at intervals, distant and confused; near to her, there was nothing but gossiping, bargaining, and laughter. Strong, rough farmers engaging young men and women as cheap as possible, their wives looking out for dairy-maids, a driving of hard bargains, and a god'spenny given as seal to the agreement; friends meeting who had not seen each other for a year, it might be, and new acquaintances easily, though, perhaps, not wisely, made. To Esther it did not seem to make much difference whether the friends were new or old, a light word or a free joke she had for any one who would receive it, and a saucy answer for most who addressed her. Rachel would not be outdone; as they advanced through the crowd, one said to her—"Are you come to be hired,

my rosy wench?" And she pertly answered—"No, indeed, I shouldn't come here to look for a place—" But the loud rejoinder—"Then I'd be off if I were you, your room would be better than your company," left her silenced.

A decent-looking woman at the other side of her, however, said—"You'll be living at Middleton, I suppose, from being with Esther Stubbs?" And Rachel answered—"Yes, with my grandmother, Mrs. Bovill—her that was head nurse at Mr. Beresford's," and then felt much consoled; for she thus gave any of the crowd, who would take the trouble to listen to her, a proper idea of her reflected greatness; but it was a moving assemblage, and, just now, there was a complete change of neighbours, for a cart was being driven towards the narrow street, and, in the general movement that it caused, Esther and Rachel found themselves able to advance much further from the corner, near which they had been jammed. Esther was not yet, however, out of reach of acquaintances; she now met some that she spoke to more warmly than any of the rest.

"Oh, Esther, is't you—well, who'd have thought it? This is a fine throng," and such like sentences were exchanged; and then Esther, with her new companions—a giddy-looking girl, and a young man,—began to elbow their way, with just a careless "Come along, Rachel, we're going to have some fun," to show that she was not entirely forgotten. Although amused, Rachel was not over well pleased to be so treated. But now they were in the more open part of the market square, near to one of the noisy shows. Here, as a large placard informed the public, were exhibited views of every remarkable

city in the world, from the taking of Sebastopol to the eruption of Mount Vesuvius ; and Rachel thought she should like very well to see these wonders, all for the small sum of twopence, and children half price ; but her companions pushed on, and, without consulting her in the least, decided that the giant, or man with two heads, would be far better worth seeing, and led the way into the other show. Here a female, in a mountebank sort of dress, was standing outside to invite the people to walk in, whilst a man, probably to attract attention, was beating, with a strong arm, on an old kettle-drum.

Noise outside and within ; nothing that Rachel could perceive but a bad, close smell, and an ugly man a head taller than her own father, and a crowd which prevented her from seeing anything more. They did not stay long, even Esther called it a take-in ; so the young man said he would make it up to them and buy them their fairings, and they went to a spice-stall, where he paid for as many handfuls of nuts as they liked to pocket, and as much gingerbread as they could eat. But about this time a smart shower of sleet came on, and there was a rushing to those stalls that had coverings, and into the nearest shops, whilst the young women that could not get shelter tied their handkerchiefs over their best bonnets.

"This would be a good time for buying the things," said Rachel, putting her head between Esther and the young man—she could not have got a word without.

"Bless me, child," said Esther, "how you bother ; is it your gloves you mean ? She's got some money that burns her pocket, for it isn't used to the feel of it," Esther added, with a laugh to her companions.

"Never mind, my lass," said the young man, good

naturedly, "it will wear fast enough, never fear. I say, what's this? Now come, girls—Here's something like. I'll treat you all. Will you go?—Just say the word."

He had stopped before a placard that was pinned up to the covering of a stall, and contained a notice to the effect that there would be a dance at the public-house named at three o'clock, admission twopence each.

"Capital," cried Esther, who seemed almost beside herself with high spirits, "capital—what say you, Polly? Let's go; it'll be rare fun, I warrant ye. And Rachel, too, she'll have had such an outing as she's not had in her life before, and grandmother thinks she's walking straight to market and back in safe company. She is quite one of them saints, is the grandmother," added Esther, in a lower tone, "lets her go nowhere. I say it's quite a charity to let the child see a bit of fun."

Now Rachel, with all her pride and wilfulness, had both sense and courage. -She thought Esther had not treated her well, bringing her out, and then making no more count of her than if she had been her umbrella, and she had besides an instinctive feeling that this dancing scheme was not a nice one, so she determined, as she expressed it, "to part company," and after doing her errands to go home. And as they had been moving along all the time, they had actually reached the door of the small inn, where the dancing was to be held, so it was needful to make up her mind. As they paused for a moment, the sound of a fiddle, mixed with the hum of voices, came up the open passage, steadily playing one of those reel tunes that have no beginning, and seem meant to have no end. "Now then, come along," said the young man, shuffling his feet upon the pavement to the measure of

the time, and he seized Rachel by the arm. "You shall have a fine jig, my girl."

"No, that I sha'n't," said Rachel, firing up, and wrenching her arm away. "Esther, I don't intend coming in there with you, and I'm going home, so I'll wish you good afternoon."

"Hollo, what now?" said Esther, in her rude manner. "Is she so frightened of grandmother?"

"No, I'm not," replied Rachel, scornfully; "but I don't choose to go into a place like that."

"Oh, that's it, is it," cried Esther; "please yourself then, you little goose; it matters nought to me, only mind you're not run away with on the road. You've taken yourself off, remember; it is no fault of mine," and so saying Esther and her companion were lost in the passage of the inn.

Rachel, left alone, considered for a minute, then looking up she saw a grocer's shop very near to her, so first of all she went there and made her purchases. Not a very easy process, for the shop was already filled with women, holding their large market baskets and wet umbrellas; but Rachel was neither impudent, like Esther, nor so timid as to be overlooked, and when she had waited a little, she was served. The next place she wanted was a draper's, but on inquiry, she found there was not one nearer than the Market Place, and that she could get out of the town this way, so, as the sleet continued, she resolved to lose no more time, but without most of the things she had come for, to set off on her journey home. Plenty of people were going in the same direction. Young men and women, sensible and discreet enough not to delay till dark, *and market* people anxious to get away

before the weather should become worse. It was unpleasant enough now, but in the first flush of her anger against Esther, Rachel never thought of wet or fatigue, although she had been on her feet for hours, and it was not until she had turned from the high road into Middleton Byers Lane, and the east wind drove the snow into her face, that she grew tired, and hoped she had not very far to go. She was but a young thing to brave such a storm alone, and happily there was a kind heart who thought so. Mrs. Ferguson, the Scotch housekeeper at the park, had been to market that day, and Graham, the head groom, was driving her home in the light tax-cart, when she caught sight of the small sturdy figure trudging along in the wet. "Graham," she said, "will you stop? There is a girl I very likely ought to know, and it would be but charity to give her a lift in such a storm." Graham was as ready as she, and checked his horse. "Stop," cried Mrs. Ferguson, to Rachel. "Will you have a ride? Where are you going to?"

"To Middleton," said Rachel, looking round.

"I thought as much. Make haste. Get up. I'll gi'e ye a hand."

It was not to say Rachel was glad; she could have cried with relief, when she found herself comfortably seated amongst the packages at the back of the cart, with a horse-rug over her knees, and sheltered by the stout occupants of the front. From under her umbrella, and over her shoulder, Mrs. Ferguson put a few questions to her, and soon gathered the facts that she had been to market with another young woman, but had chosen to come back by herself rather than stay with her (at which

Mrs. Ferguson gave a grunt of approbation), and that she was Mrs. Bovill's granddaughter.

"I said I ought to know you," observed the housekeeper; "and surely none of Mrs. Bovill's kin should be strange to me, and I am glad to find that you are as prudent as hers should be. It has been a great trouble to me, having been at our town house, superintending the alterations, so that I have never been able to pay her a visit during her illness, and I hope you will tell her so."

Rachel replied, "Yes, ma'am," and the battle between the wind and Mrs. Ferguson's umbrella had by this time become so violent that its owner was obliged to give her whole strength to it, and Rachel remained unmolested until they reached the turning into the park, when Graham stopped. "No, no," said Mrs. Ferguson, "drive on; we'll take her to the end," and, continuing along the lane, they did not stop again until they had landed her safely at Mrs. Bovill's door. "My kind love to your grandmother," said Mrs. Ferguson, and they had driven off again before Rachel had got into the house. The warmth inside felt very pleasant as she entered, and the twilight was far enough advanced to make the firelight indoors seem dazzling. "Oh, child," cried her grandmother, "how glad I am to see you. I have been very uneasy, only I thought Mrs. Stubbs would be sure to try and get you places in Chapman's cart."

"Mrs. Stubbs wasn't there at all," blurted out Rachel, "and I came home part way with the housekeeper. She has got back from London."

"Mrs. Stubbs not there! What do you mean?" cried her grandmother. "Mary, my dear, you had best go home, now. Your father may want you, and I am very

much obliged to him for sparing you, and to you for coming, as well as to Miss Beresford for having such kind thought of me."

Rachel had not at first perceived that there was another person in the room, but now she saw sitting quietly with her back to her, Mary Bean, the daughter of one of the gamekeepers, who lived about two hundred yards off, between Mrs. Bovill's cottage and the lodge. Mary Bean was a very quiet, neat girl, little known, for she was shy about making acquaintances, partly because of an impediment in her speech, partly because her father being a widower, and she his only child, there was plenty for her to do at home. Rachel knew her by sight, but had never spoken to her, nor heard her speak, and she was a little startled to hear the queer stammering way in which, as she rose and rolled up her knitting, Mary tried to say how glad she was to have been of any use. She had a pleasant face, very amiable in its expression, and, from a child, she had been a favourite with Mrs. Bovill. Whilst she was wrapping herself in her plaid shawl, and putting on the tidy bonnet that had been hung up on a nail, Rachel was shaking the snow off herself, and changing her shoes, which were soaked in wet, and was all the time impatient for the stranger to depart; and it would seem that Mrs. Bovill shared the feeling, for as soon as ever Mary Bean had bid "good night," and Rachel had shut the door upon her, the good old lady said, "Now, honey, there's something wrong, I fear. Be quick, and tell me all about it." But as Rachel came near she saw how wet she was, and added, "You had better wait though, till you have changed yourself, and then come and get warmed, and have your tea. Mary Bean was so

kind as to set all ready, so neat and nice. I'm sure she is one for any girl to take pattern by."

This was rather a mistimed application of Mary Bean's good qualities. Rachel's ready pride took fire, and she would not deign a glance at the tea-table, but hastened to take her things off, with an unpromising shrugging of her shoulders. She was, however, anxious to relieve her mind, and before long came back again and began, "Mrs. Stubbs never went, grandmother, and she wasn't going; it was all a lie of Esther's, and I told her I would tell you."

"Oh, honey, you do not say so; what a wicked girl she is. I do hope you will have no more acquaintance with her, Rachel, for she is not a fit companion for you."

"She'll do me no harm," said Rachel, scornfully. "I can't bear her. She's bold and she's mean; however, I was determined to show her that I would have no part in her ways."

"You did quite right, my dear, to show that you disapproved of such behaviour," said Mrs. Bovill, wondering what had passed between the girls.

"Right or not right, I wasn't going to stand her impudence," continued Rachel. "She took me off with her to Slapton, and then she cared nothing for me. There was lots of fine things we might have seen, and went nowhere but to a shop where we could get nothing, and to a show that took us all in, and Esther, I'm sure she never cared for anything but the young man that she had with her."

"Oh, Rachel, my dear, how I do grieve that I ever let you stir out with her! Let it be the last time, I desire."

"You needn't *fear me*, grandmother," said Rachel;

"do you think I'd ever do like her? I'd be very sorry and I showed her so pretty plainly. But grandmother, I'm hungry."

"I should think so," replied her grandmother, kindly. "Let us have tea at once, and then you can tell me more, for in truth I hardly understand it yet."

There was a healthy young girl's appetite to be satisfied before Mrs. Bovill's curiosity, but she was very patient, and never asked another question until Rachel's hunger had disappeared, and her excitement was somewhat calmed, then she learned all.

"Oh, Rachel," she said, when the story had been told, "I cannot tell you how pleased I am with you this day. It has gladdened my heart to think that you had the courage to leave Esther to her own evil ways, and to come home where you would be surely safe from them. I thank God that He has preserved you from the pitfalls that have surrounded you."

It was no mere form of words, but a deep feeling of thankfulness that inspired Mrs. Bovill, and the expression of it touched even Rachel; the unusual sound of approval, too, was grateful to her ears; she did not, however, show her feelings, and only busied herself after her usual noisy fashion in washing up the cups and saucers. Nevertheless, she was still in a much more talkative humour than was her wont, and before long she stopped short in her employment, and said—"Grandmother, how came Mary Bean to be sitting with you?"

"It was all my dear Miss Beatie's doing," replied her grandmother. "She found out I was by myself."

"We met her in the lane," said Rachel, "her and her governess, Esther said it was."

"Yes, Miss Young told me she had seen you. Miss Beatie had been quite put about, dear heart, with the thoughts of my being alone, and not at all content with only Bessie Stubbs to look after me, and indeed, after what has passed, I should not wish to have any more to do with that family. Miss Beatie would have liked to have run in herself to see me, but it appears that her papa had been displeased with her for staying out yesterday longer than the hour by which it is his rule she should come in, so he forbid her coming to see me again, for I know not how long. So there she was longing to come, as soon as ever she caught sight of the rose-tree that she gave me, and was not able; so Miss Young, who seems a kind lady, although I thought her cold and stiff in her manner, when I first saw her, offered to bring me a message from her. I was quite surprised to see her, but she only stayed a minute or two, just to explain, and to ask me to name some one I would like to have, for Miss Beatie would have no peace till I had some one; so in haste I named Mary Bean, and Miss Young went off directly to join Miss Beatie, and they found Jacob somewhere, and made interest with him to spare Mary, which he is not very fond of doing, and very nice company she has been for me all the afternoon."

"Well, if I would be kept in so tight, if I was a young lady," exclaimed Rachel, when her grandmother's account was finished, and she had taken up her favourite position, which was certainly rather an idle one, leaning against the corner of the fireplace opposite her grandmother.

"Oh, but you see, Rachel being a young lady or not makes no difference in the law of God. 'Honour thy father and thy mother' is the same for rich and poor alike."

"He must be fine and strict, though, must Mr. Beresford," observed Rachel.

"So he is very strict," said Mrs. Bovill, "and many a time my heart has ached for my dear young lady, but it all comes right to her. She never blames anybody but herself, and as for thinking her papa unjust or hard, she would never dream of such a thing. I've seen Master Arthur fly out and call it a shame when Miss Beatrice was punished for, it might be, a mere mistake, whilst she would only say, 'I did wrong, you know, dear Arthur.' But then she has such an example in her mamma. Mrs. Beresford is one of the sweetest ladies that ever lived, and although she is always suffering, she never seems to think of herself, and that, perhaps, is what makes her so humble, for pride and selfishness generally go together. Miss Beatie is just like her, but Master Arthur is quite different. To be sure it is not so easy for a young gentleman who knows that he will be master of such a fine property, and will have so much money, and have so many people under him, to keep his heart from being proud. That is why our Saviour said it was 'easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of Heaven,' for the gate of Heaven is a lowly one, and the person who holds his head always high cannot enter it."

Rachel was not listening now—she was wondering whether Esther Stubbs had got home yet, and thinking what a grand thing she had done in leaving her, and pluming herself finely about it; and Mrs. Bovill, who had rather been giving vent to her own thoughts than talking to Rachel, relapsed into silence, as she dwelt in her own mind upon the perils that awaited her dear Master

Arthur in his future life. At last the falling of a large coal upon the hearth recalled her to the present time, and she said—"You never showed me your parcels, Rachel, honey; you got the coffee, I know, for I smelt it when you came in, but what did you buy for yourself?"

"Nothing at all, grandmother. I thought of a new cap-border after I got there, but it was no use, I hadn't time to go back to the shops, so I shan't get to church to-morrow."

"I am sorry, my dear, but you know it was quite an accident your going to Slapton to-day, and surely you had not intended to stay away from church, if you had not gone there."

"I never intended nothing," said Rachel, with her careless way of speaking; "but my bonnet's quite shabby, and Ann Todd laughed at my gloves only last Sunday, so I'm sure I'm not going again for her to mock at me. I wish I hadn't to sit among them girls, grandmother. Why haven't you a seat? Father and us, we have one of the best in church, quite comfortable."

"You know I always sat with the housekeeper when I was at the hall," replied Mrs. Bovill, "and since then I have never been well enough to go to church, but when I am able to enter the courts of the Lord's House again, I shall be content to sit anywhere, so that I may be within those blessed walls."

Rachel looked rather cross, whilst her grandmother continued,—“You remind me, Rachel, of my dear Miss Beatie again. It was only last year, when there was the small-pox in the village, and the governess, not Miss Young, the one before her, was away for her holidays, and they sent me and Miss Beatie to the sea-side to be

out of the way of infection. We got there on the Saturday, and knew nothing about the place, only Mr. Johnson the house-steward had gone before to get us comfortable lodgings; but we were quite strangers in the place, which was only a small fishing village, with a few lodging-houses. Next morning was Sunday, and as soon as the single cracked bell of the old church, which we could see from the windows, began to ring, we got ready, and without asking any questions of anybody, we set off to the service. The church was but small, and being the summer season it was rather crowded with visitors; and when we got in, the only seats that were at liberty were some open benches near the door. I can see my dear young lady now as she walked in, so reverent and still-looking; she just glanced round at me to see where she was to go, and then, as I could not tell her, she went straight to one of the open-benches and knelt down on the flags beside a poor old man, who looked half bent-double with rheumatism. I can feel for him now," added the good nurse, with a sort of groan. "When they began 'Awake my soul,' he offered her his hymn-book, and she looked on with him, and joined her sweet voice to his shaky singing; and when the woman, who it seemed generally showed people to their places, came during the psalms, and said, seeing what my young lady really was, 'I can find you a seat, miss,' she only shook her head and smiled; 'For why,' as she said to me afterwards, 'should I have moved? I think the good old man had more need of a cushioned seat than I;' and so I said nothing to put different ideas in her head. She was just the same with her equals. A few days afterwards she was invited to what they called a strawberry feast, at a

castle a few miles off, where some friends of her mamma's lived ; and her governess had not come to join us then, so I went with her, and I could not help admiring her as she went about among the gay young people there, looking so modest, and more anxious to help the little ones to their strawberries, and to coax them out of their shyness, than wishing to attract any notice for herself ; though as such a rich young lady, and out of respect to her papa, as well as for her own sweet self, there were many there who would have paid her great attentions."

"She hasn't a bit of spirit seemingly, that's the worst," said Rachel, jealously ; and, indeed, Mrs. Bovill did seem to make her beloved young lady too much of a rival to her grand-daughter.

"I don't know exactly what you mean by spirit," said Mrs. Bovill ; "but when there was anything to call it out, Miss Beresford had as much dignity as any one. I remember on that very day, she happened to be sitting under a tree—for it was hot, and they were glad of a little shade—beside two haughty ladies ; indeed, I should hardly have called them real ladies, only make-believe ones ; they gave themselves such airs, and they were amusing themselves by laughing at the company. As I stood behind, I could hear their saucy speeches, and very sneering and free they were, until at last they took to whispering, and it was plain that they were handling my young lady. At first she only opened her blue eyes rather wide, and looked at them ; for she did not quite understand—how should she ?—but in the end they became too bold, and I saw her colour rise, and then she quietly got up, and like a little queen she walked slowly away and sat herself down beside an old lady, a countess, who was the giver of the

feast, and who had noticed Miss Beatie a great deal all the day."

"I like that," said Rachel. "That's something like, only I would have told them a piece of my mind first."

"It was not that she bore them any malice," continued Mrs. Bovill, "only that she did not feel herself called upon to be a target for their rude shots; for it happened, towards evening, when most of the company were drawing near to the house where there was to be a dance, and Miss Beatie was going too, but only to take leave; for by her mamma's orders she was to go away before dusk, when, as she walked with the Lady Eleanor across the lawn, she heard a little scream behind her, and there was one of the saucy young ladies calling out that there was a wasp amongst her hair. 'Stand still,' said Miss Beatie in a minute, 'for I have thick gloves on;' and, so saying, she plunged her fingers in the young lady's thick, frizzy hair, and taking out the wasp, crushed it beneath her feet. The young lady had the grace to colour like a poppy, as soon as she saw who it was that had saved her from so severe a sting as that might have been, and she said, 'Thank you, Miss Beresford, I am very much obliged to you'; but Miss Beatie, she only bowed her head without a bit of smile, and walked on with her companion.

"Well if I would have done that," said Rachel; "but ladies are so different."

"Nay, my dear, not in these things," said her grandmother—"at least they should not be; there is a law of kindness for all Christians, rich and poor alike, and it is quite possible for a poor girl, who has nothing, to be as proud-hearted as a great lady, if she does not mind the rules of her Bible, and try to live by them. But, Rachel,

about this Sunday bonnet of yours? Although I do not want you to think too much about your clothes, it is right to go as clean and neat as possible to church. I've been thinking there is a border, as good as new, in my best black silk bonnet, the lady's maid put me it in months ago, but it is fresh still, and you may have it."

It would have been impossible for Rachel not to be pleased with the kind way in which her grandmother made this proposal; and whilst she was finding the best bonnet, and afterwards when they were contriving how the cap might be made to suit her smaller face, there was more good feeling between the young girl and her suffering grandmother than there had been since Rachel came to Middleton. And, happily, the effects of that day did not entirely wear off. Rachel had felt the pleasure of acting rightly, and, for once, self-respect had taken the place of sinful pride; whilst her grandmother, seeing the good in her, had become more hopeful, and, consequently, more encouraging in the way she spoke to her; and there was a good chance, besides, of the intimacy with the Stubbs family being broken off, and thus one source of evil influence removed. But, with all this, there was plenty of ground for every-day miseries left behind. It is not from outward sources such as these, that the precious flowers of life's paths spring forth. Patience, humility, long suffering—these good things Rachel knew but dimly; nor until her head was willingly bowed to the yoke of Him who was lowly and meek, could the blessed fruits of the knowledge of Him appear.

It was more than a year from the time we last left Rachel. Instead of the brown trees just sprinkled with snow, the dull, leaden sky, and the cold look everywhere,

there was now warmth in the air, and pleasant verdure over everything. Middleton Byers was not a prettily situated village ; at least the country round was flat, there were no hills near it, and the river was half a mile off, so that, in walking beyond the village, it was often pleasant to turn away from the well-cultivated, large fields, with their low, straight hedges, and look up at the sky, where so often there was an expanse of beauty in the soft, billowy clouds, with their shady hollows, or in the deep, clear blue, that the eye had searched for in vain below. At this season, however, the scene was different. Rich crops filled the fields, the long lane was shaded with bowery trees, wild roses and honeysuckle sweetened and adorned the hedges, and full, green leafiness spread over the whole country. As for Rachel, I can scarcely say that she had changed for the better, like the scene around her. It is true that, like the corn, she had grown to a good height, and there were brighter roses in her cheeks. People said what a pretty girl Mrs. Bovill's granddaughter was going to be ; but for those who looked for the fruits that should be now appearing, to ripen in the autumn of life, there was disappointment—for pride and wilfulness were still the masters of poor Rachel. Her grandmother had grown worse in health, and was more worried by the girl's caprices than she owned to any one, but her patience was increasing daily, and, as she prayed, so she hoped that some day Rachel might begin to alter. Her bodily sufferings were often very great ; but one Saturday she had felt better than usual, and, in the afternoon, as she sat with the house door open, she was able to please herself with the merry voices of the children as they passed, and even with the sounds of hay-making farther off ; and

she was trying to dwell upon these pleasant things rather than upon her own pains, when Rachel, who had been out gossiping at a neighbour's, burst into the room.

"Grandmother," she said, "there is a carriage coming out of the park, and it looks like Master Arthur that is driving."

"She is bringing him then," said the old woman, in a low tone, and her poor, worn face brightened as she listened eagerly for the coming wheels. If it was Master Arthur, it would not be long before she saw them, for his pace, both in riding and driving, was the wonder and admiration of all the village boys, and in fact, a few minutes had only elapsed when a carriage drove up at full speed and a figure darkened the doorway, whilst a sweet, glad voice said—"Here is Arthur, Bovey; I told you he would be sure to come." Like Rachel, Miss Beatie had grown quite womanly in these last eighteen months, but she was still slender, and had a childlike face. She was followed by a young man, so tall that he stooped as he came through the doorway, and then, laughing, took off his straw-hat, and holding out his hand, said—"Yes, here I am, Mrs. Bovey."

"I cannot get up to receive you, Master Arthur," said the old nurse, with tears in her eyes, "but you are not the less welcome for that. I am not likely to live till you return, and I did, indeed, want to see you once more."

"My good Bovey, keep up your spirits," answered Master Arthur, kindly. "I dare say you'll be all right when I come back from Greece."

"I hope I shall be all right, my dear, but it won't be in this world. However, I don't want to sadden your

dear faces with such thoughts, though they are not sad to me. Set chairs, Rachel."

Rachel had disappeared, as she generally did as soon as ever Miss Beatie came in sight, partly out of jealousy, partly from her dislike to pay her the respect her grandmother demanded ; but Master Arthur drew a chair out for his sister, and himself standing near the table in the window, said, "Don't disturb yourself, nurse ; we can't stay long. Beatie said you wanted to see me, so we drove round this way ; but, as you may suppose, I have lots of things to do, for I start on Monday."

"On Monday, Master Arthur ?"

"Yes, I am going to stay two or three days at General Courtenay's. You remember Charles Courtenay, nurse ? a nice fellow, though he is a little bit of a muff. My tutor meets me in town, so I shall take him down with me to Uncle Ralph's, and on Friday next I leave my native shores."

"Miss Beatie will miss you sadly, won't you, my dear ?"

Miss Beatie's eyes might have spoken for her, but she said, "Arthur likes it so much. He has always wished to go abroad."

"And I am going for ever, Bovey. You know people can travel to Rome and back in a fortnight, now-a-days. I shall, however, stay for a year or two, unless, indeed, my father should find himself unable to do without me. Beatie, however, will see to that, and when I come back I mean to do great things for her. She is mewed up here until she has not an idea beyond spelling-books and feeding chickens"

"Oh, Arthur," laughed Miss Beatie. "What nonsense."

"My dear," said the young gentleman, "it is quite true. You cannot possibly judge of your life here, when you know no other. I shall persuade my father to take a house in town. Such a thing it was of him to sell the old one, and you must go to Paris, only there is mamma," and as he spoke of her a shade of tenderness softened both his tone and manner.

"Yes, Master Arthur," said Mrs. Bovill; "your mamma must always be the first consideration in your plans. There is no lady like her. To be with her seems to me a greater privilege than what any great city can offer to you; for my dear mistress lives for a far better world than this, and the spirit of that better world is already round her."

"You have a fine geranium here, nurse," said Master Arthur, who had turned round to the window.

"Miss Beatie's gift, my dear, and the kindness that thought of pleasing an old woman makes it a beautiful sight to me."

"Dear Bovey, do not say so," whispered Miss Beatie, caressing her, "the pleasure was mine in bringing it to you."

"There are none so fine as this in the conservatory," continued Master Arthur, examining the blossoms. "I believe, nurse, that Beatrice has a pet gardener and greenhouse of her own. Farquharson is no florist. I mean to persuade papa to have a better man."

"Would you like a sprig for your button-hole, Master Arthur?" said Mrs. Bovill. "See, there is one standing out that might well be spared. I should like to think I had helped to deck you out once more."

"Thanks, nurse; here goes, then," said he, snapping off

a spray of bright crimson flowers, and stooping down for her to pin it in his coat.

"You were always the light of my eyes, Master Arthur, my dear," said the old woman, as he laughed, and drew himself up, with a sort of good-humoured vanity, for her ready admiration. "I can fancy that I see you now, in your black velvet frock, and your curls hanging down, not cropped short as you have them now. You were indeed a bonnie boy."

The young man glanced first at the withered but loving face of his old nurse, and then at the sweet eyes of his sister, who was looking up at him with an affection that echoed Mrs. Bovill's words, and he gave another pleased, but half shy laugh, and said, quickly, "Come, Beatrice, we must go now. Think how many miles we have to run over before dinner," and as Miss Beatie started up, he added, "Good-bye, Bovey; I will bring you a meerschaum from Germany, and some coffee from the East, so keep up your spirits, and learn to smoke," and so saying, he cut short Miss Beatie's more quiet adieux, and hurried her out to the carriage, which was waiting outside for them.

The next morning, Rachel, who now possessed both good gloves, and a neat summer bonnet, had gone to church as usual, and Mrs. Bovill sat alone, with her Bible and prayer-book, and her own happy, pious thoughts, not thinking the hours long until her granddaughter should come back again. Rachel was not generally amongst the earliest. First Mrs. Bovill would hear a few boys passing hastily, then the heavier tread of the father of a family, whose pattering feet trotted after him, or it might be the sober discourse of two women discussing the morning

sermon, or the gay laugh of some younger people, and the clatter of the school children, all before Rachel, who would often stay to watch the Hall family come out, and to gossip with some girls as they came home through the park ; but to-day Mrs. Bovill had no sooner begun to say to herself, " Church will be loosing, now," to look up at the clock and to listen for the accustomed sounds, than Rachel burst in, choking, as it seemed, with the news she had to tell. " Grandmother, what do you think ? The confirmation is on the 3rd of September ; and Master Arthur has been prayed for."

" Master Arthur ! What do you mean ? " cried Mrs. Bovill, her mouth quivering with agitation, and scarcely able to utter the words.

" It was in the middle of the prayers, Arthur Beresford who is dangerously ill, that was it. All the people were talking about it when I came out ; standing about, and saying there had been an accident. Mr. Ferguson wasn't at church, nor the lady's-maid, or any of the family, so I came on to tell you. I am first of everybody, only Jim Soames' lad ran past me just at the gate, and he banged it right in my face, a rough one as he is."

It was as well that Rachel ran on thus, for Mrs. Bovill could not speak ; at last she said, " Oh, honey, do go and ask somebody what it is. Oh, my beautiful boy, and Miss Beatie, my darling. Run, Rachel, ask at Bean's, that's nearest where they are likely to know ; or else, go up to the Hall, and ask to speak to Mrs. Ferguson. Say that I'm sorry to trouble her, but I can't rest till I know. Oh, my beautiful boy !"

" Here is Mary Bean, grandmother," said Rachel, who had moved towards the open door, and as she spoke Mary

Bean came in with her usually pale quiet face, paler than ever, but not quiet. She was evidently full of tidings, but unhappily the impediment in her speech was made worse by her anxiety to express herself, and she could only stand with her mouth open, struggling to articulate.

"Take time to tell me, my dear, don't hurry yourself," said Mrs. Bovill, speaking in an agonized tone that contrasted with her words. Mary gave one more effort and finally burst into tears. At this moment Esther Stubbs came in, fine and flaunting; she had come over to spend the Sunday.

"Have you heard the news, Mrs. Bovill? Ain't it shocking? Young Mr. Beresford's been killed. Thrown out of the *phe-a-ton* and dashed to pieces. So mother says there's an end of their pride. But it's an awful thing, though. You're not going off, Mrs. Bovill. Well, I never, I wouldn't have said nothing, if I'd a' known."

Is was enough to frighten even Esther. A deadly paleness had spread over the old woman's face, and life itself seemed leaving her.

"Get some water, Rachel," came sharply from Mary Bean's hitherto speechless lips, as she flew to her old friend's side, chafed her poor cold hands, untied her cap-strings, and gave her some of the water Rachel brought immediately.

"You'd better be off, Esther," said Rachel, turning fiercely round. "You've done all the harm you could"

"I'm sure now, blaming me," retorted Esther; "you'd best hold your saucy tongue, Rachel Bovill, for I won't stand it from you."

"Hush, hush," said Mary turning her head over her shoulder, as she still kept one arm round the old woman,

and held the cup of water with the other. "This is no time for—" she could get no more out, but Esther, giving herself an angry flounce, replied,—

"You needn't be afraid. I'm not going to intrude upon you, Miss Bean. She's coming to, all right. No need to make such a fluster," and so saying, she moved towards the door so quickly that she nearly knocked against the next comer, who was none other than the keeper, Jacob Bean. He was in his Sunday velveteens, but looked very grave.

"What, Mary," said he as he came in; "have you been beforehand with me? I thought Missis here would be wanting to know how our young gentleman is. Hollo, she is very bad herself, I fear."

Mrs. Bovill was not so bad, but she could catch the meaning of his words, and gently pushing Mary aside, she said, "Jacob tell me, she says he is killed."

"Killed, no! who has told you that with their gossiping lies?" and he threw a glance back at where he thought Esther Stubbs would be, but she had vanished; there was never any good will between her and the sturdy keeper. "No, no, it's bad enough, but not so bad as that. I've heard it all just now from Graham, and he has only come back a bit since from Corby, where our poor young gentleman lies."

"Tell me then, please, Jacob," said Mrs. Bovill in a feeble voice, "for I've been sorely frightened."

"Well, you see," said Jacob, sitting down in a chair that Rachel had pushed forward, and resting his hands upon his knees; "the truth is, Master Arthur is but a rash one at all times, and high-spirited, and it seems that he was going to *drive out with his sister yesterday*, and he

got them to put in the new bay, that master had said he was not to drive it till such times as coachman could say it was quite safe. The bay certainly is a horse that any gentleman might be proud of sitting a-back of, and so he set off with it yesterday, and finely they went, him and his sister, till they came going down that hill at Corby, and there the bay began to plunge ; whether Master Arthur had touched him with the whip or not, I can't pretend to say, for the groom, he got out to hold his head, and he's so injured he can give no account, however, there it plunged and reared, and set off down the hill, and at that sharp turn it over with the phe-a-ton, and Master Arthur were thrown on a heap of stones, while Miss, she was laid quiet in the ditch."

Mrs. Bovill's eager eyes asked him to go on, although her anxiety was really too great for speech.

"All Corby was out in no time," continued Jacob, "and Master Arthur he was picked up, and they carried him to the Blue Bell ; it's Mrs. Pickhill keeps it, so you may reckon her doors were open to them, and the doctor was got, and as yet they can't say how it will turn out, and master being away it makes it worse, only of course, they have sent for him ; there is youth on his side, they say, and something of the skull on the other, so I don't know."

"And Miss Beresford ?" gasped the poor old nurse.

"Graham couldn't speak much of her, the tears fairly came into his eyes, he is so fond of her, not that she is so much hurt, but it was the way she took it. First thing her thought was for Master Arthur, and there she stays beside him as pale as a ghost, and never leaves him. Mrs. Ferguson, she went off at once, but she says she

isn't needed, for Miss does everything better than she could—no hand like a loving one, you know, and all so patient and quiet, and always sending messages over to poor Missis with the news."

"Ay, ay, my poor lady, how sore a trial for her," said Mrs. Bovill, clasping her hands together.

"Yes, that's what I said to Mary," answered Jacob; "'never mind your tongue, Mary,' says I, 'so long as you have your legs,' but I ask your pardon, Mrs. Bovill, I'd forgot, it is small use you have of yours."

"Never mind, Jacob, if I could but bear my state with patience, the mention of it would not hurt me. You may think what I would give to-day for the power to go and help my poor children, but I must learn to be still; it is that I need, or the lesson would not be sent to me."

Jacob listened respectfully; like most of the other people about, he considered Mrs. Bovill a person something almost like 'my lady' herself, to be looked up to, and admired from a distance, but it was his dinner-time, and as he had finished his tale, and as all his sympathy did not take away his appetite, he now called his daughter Mary, and bidding Mrs. Bovill a kindly good-day, he took his leave, promising to let her know, if he should hear of any change for good or ill in the course of the afternoon.

All this time Rachel had been standing and listening with a quietness that was quite unusual for her. There was something so startling and so shocking in the thought of this fine, brave, young gentleman, one hour bright, active, handsome, as she had seen him, the next, helpless and suffering, carried into the little inn at Corby. All

the time she was moving about after the dinner, there was no word spoken, for Mrs. Bovill was sitting looking into the fire, wiping every now and then the tears that would flow, though slowly, and Rachel was thinking over Jacob's story.

No wonder that her mind was solemnized to attend to the afternoon service at church as she had never attended to it before. Instead of looking at Ann Merrington's bonnet, and wondering how she could come in such a thing, or watching every movement of the modest young ladies in the Rectory pew, or taking notice of the new way in which Miss Trotter of Ditton Farm had done her hair, for once Rachel was trying to mind the prayers, and when the Rector began to preach, she listened without a wandering thought. The sermon, a short one, as most of Mr. Gilmonby's afternoon addresses were, was chiefly addressed to the young people who were desirous of coming to confirmation, and when he spoke in general terms of the importance and benefit of the holy ordinance, and of the disposition necessary in those who approached it, Rachel, although she did not understand,—for people cannot at once jump into an understanding of the sacred truths that they have for years neglected,—was yet impressed and serious.

"I say, Rachel, are you going to be confirmed?" asked Jane Stubbs, as they came out of church.

"I don't know," answered Rachel, shortly.

"Of course she will," said another girl of their acquaintance who had joined them. "The Rector says he's going to take in all girls of fifteen, if they're fit for it."

"Well, I'm sure, as for being fit," said Jane Stubbs,

"if I'm to do all he says. I'm not going to be tied down that way."

"For shame, Jane," said the other. "It is no more than we ought. You should hear Mrs. Gilmonby talk about it in the Sunday school. It's quite beautiful. Mother says I'm to have a new gingham frock, lilac, it's the neatest, and a white net cap, and I am going to give my name in, first thing."

Poor Grace Walker, it was to be hoped that before the time came, she would think as much about the spirit of her mind as she did now about the clothing of her body, but any thing was better than Jane Stubbs's daring flippancy. As for Rachel, she gave either of the girls but small attention, and short, cross answers, for she had a great deal working in her head, and it was more willingly than usual that she parted company with them at the park gates, and went in to make tea ready.

"Have you heard anything, honey?" asked her grandmother, almost before she had got into the house.

"About Master Arthur? No," said Rachel. "The girls were talking about it, but they had heard nothing fresh since morning."

"Patience," said Mrs. Bovill to herself. "But my poor mistress will have more need of it than I."

"They're all talking about the confirmation," remarked Rachel, as they sat at tea.

"I dare say, honey. Poor Miss Beatie. She was full of it a few days ago, when she was here."

"Will she have to be confirmed?" asked Rachel, with a sort of astonishment in her eyes.

"Of course, my dear, why not?" said Mrs. Bovill. "Did you expect that it was only for poor girls?"

"I never thought about it, grandmother."

"Ah, but Miss Beatie, she has thought about it, and been wishing for it, and for all that it would open her the way to, and for a month past she has been reading with the new Rector in preparation for it. You'll be there, too, I hope, Rachel."

"I suppose so, grandmother," said Rachel, glibly. "They say the Rector is going to take in all girls above fifteen, and my birthday is just at Christmas, you know."

"To admit them as candidates, you mean," said Mrs. Bovill. "It is not only age that is required."

"I can say my catechism, grandmother," said Rachel, complacently.

"Middling," replied Mrs. Bovill; "but it is not only that, Rachel. Young people come to confirmation to renew their baptismal vow, and to receive, by the hands of the bishop, the Holy Ghost to strengthen them, and so, before they come, they must understand all about what this vow is, and they must know, by considering their own weakness, how much they stand in need of heavenly strength."

"The girls have to go to-morrow night at seven o'clock, grandmother, to give in their names. Shall I go?"

"Yes, honey, you had better. I am glad to see you anxious about so good a thing. My prayers shall go with you."

"Grandmother," continued Rachel, not caring to reply to the last remark, "I could slip up to the hall after tea, and ask if they have heard anything."

"Well, my dear, I wish you would. Ask to speak to Mrs. Ferguson. I expect she has come back again, from

what Jacob said. "You had better leave the tea-things, just set them aside, and go off at once that you may get back quickly. It should not take you more than half an hour, so young as you are."

The walk would be far nicer than staying in to say her catechism, besides it was her own proposal, so with great willingness Rachel got her hat and started. It was a beautiful August evening, the sun was still bright upon everything, but a clear briskness in the air prevented its rays from being at all oppressive. Before very long Rachel had passed through the turning gate, had tripped across the park, passed the church which stood very near to the hall, and had gone round to the kitchen-door, where she knocked and inquired for the housekeeper. With some anxiety she listened to the reply of the little scullery-maid, who had been left to take care of this part of the house, for a wish had entered her head as she crossed the park; and when the girl replied "No, she has not come back from Corby yet," she determined to carry her wish into execution. She would go to Corby, too, see the place for herself, perhaps see Miss Beatie, and bring home the latest news to her grandmother.

"Which is the shortest way to Corby?" was her next inquiry of the scullery-maid.

"Foot-road, do you mean?" asked the girl, and receiving a nod from Rachel in reply, she came out of the house, and pointing to a distant corner of the park, she added, "You see that oak-tree stands by itself, go right past that and you will come to a gate leads you into the middle of the road, and further on you turn into a wood leads you straight to Corby. It's not more than two miles that way; but if you like to wait, I believe one of the grooms is going over

with some things in about an hour's time, and you might go with him."

"No, thank you," said Rachel, "I've no time to wait; good night," and off she set as quickly as she had come.

It was straight enough to the old oak-tree, then a step took her to the gate, and she was out upon the highroad to Corby. For a minute Rachel thought of following that, instead of the shorter route, in order to see the precise spot upon which the accident took place; but prudence prevailed, and she crossed the stile into the wood. She was quite at home now; for the wood was a favourite resort of the village girls, either in primrose, nut, or bramble time, though she had never been to the far end of it; but there was a path all the way, and the end of three-quarters of an hour found her at the door of the wayside inn, which had so suddenly become the refuge of pain and trouble. The door stood wide open, but no one was near; only the stillness of a Sunday evening was all around. On the doorstep lay an old terrier dog, who, as Rachel approached, got up and sniffed at her, then seemingly satisfied lay down again. Rather breathless with her quick walking, and not without a little tremor, now that she had come to the end of her journey, Rachel stepped across the threshold, and knocked with her knuckles on the door. The sound reverberated through the silent house.

"Whist there," said a sharpish voice in an undertone; whilst the owner of it, who was the landlady herself, appeared at the far end of the passage, holding in her hand a large wooden spoon. "Well, what do you want?" she continued. "Come in here as soft as you can," and disappeared again directly.

Stepping on her tiptoes, which, however, were far from

noisy, Rachel went up the narrow passage and found herself in the kitchen, where the landlady was already standing before a good fire and bending over a pan which she was stirring carefully.

"Please can I speak to Mrs. Ferguson?" asked Rachel, timidly.

"Who are you?" asked Mrs. Pickhill, endeavouring to divide her attention between Rachel and the pan. "It's sad times here now, and we can't be disturbed with everybody."

"I am Mrs. Bovill's grand-daughter," replied Rachel. "She was head-nurse at the Hall; and I am to ask Mrs. Ferguson how Master Arthur is."

"Bad enough, indeed, as I could tell you," groaned the landlady; "but if Mrs. Bovill desired you to see her, you may just put off your shoes, and creep upstairs, for I can't leave this, and my girl's out. Now, mind you don't make a mistake; go as soft as you can, turn to the right, and the second door is her room, which is for the present."

Rachel, much relishing the adventure, took off her shoes at once, and crept up the old-fashioned, creaky stairs; but instead of finding Mrs. Ferguson when she reached the second right-hand door, there was only an empty room, and hearing a murmur of voices in the other direction, she followed the sound, and went along a narrow passage till she came to a sight that rivetted her footsteps. She had reached a wide open doorway, between which and the opposite window there was nothing to hide the blue sky unflecked by clouds, and the garland of climbing roses that flapped against the window frames. But a little within the doorway was a table covered with

bottles, glasses, spoons, and many signs of a sick-room; whilst on the clean, though homely bed, at the far end of the room, lay the gay, handsome Master Arthur. How changed since yesterday! The pillow seemed scarcely whiter than the face that rested on it; his dark curls were hidden by wet bandages, and his eyes though bright, were sunk and unnaturally large. But sitting close beside him, with one of his hot hands in hers, was Miss Beatie, looking as an angel might have done, so pure and good, sad, very sad, but still peaceful, as one who knew no will but that of God. Her fair, long hair was gathered smoothly in a knot behind, and her white muslin dress fell in soft folds around her. "Out of the deep have I called unto Thee, O Lord." She was reading the evening psalms to him in a soft, low voice. "Lord, I am not high-minded: I have no proud looks," and so on to the end, when she paused, and all was so quiet that Rachel could hear her own breath. Then came a sigh of bitter pain, a sigh that came as it were out of the deep.

"What is it, Arthur, dear?" said Miss Beatie. "Does your head ache so very much?"

But there was only another sigh for answer, and a restless tossing of the wearied frame. So she smoothed the pillow with her cool soft hand, and sat quite still. It seemed as if Miss Beatie knew by instinct, that the best attribute in a nurse is tranquillity. At last Master Arthur spoke.

"Beatie," he said, "read me that again."

"Out of the deep," began Miss Beatie, repeating it from memory.

"No, no, the next," said the impatient feverish voice.

"Lord, I have no proud looks."

"Yes, yes," said Master Arthur, interrupting her, that is it. Sharper than a two-edged sword is the thought of my past life to me now, Beatie. I have been proud and selfish always. Mamma often warned me; but I thought she was so religious and too particular, and I heeded not her words. I refused to listen to anything that was good. To be a man, a gentleman, I thought was everything. To be brave and honourable, to have power and knowledge, to be distinguished amongst men, all these things I looked for; but as the psalm says, 'Lord, what is man?' Here I am cut down like a thistle that has vainly reared itself against the scythe of destruction, and the better things that I have slighted now rise against me like mockery and scourges."

Miss Beatie turned paler than ever, and she trembled; but she gave no other sign except that she stroked the hand that in the agitation of his soul he had thrown outside the coverlid. But soon her quivering lips opened, and like the sound of soft music in the midst of a tempest, came the words, "The sacrifice of God is a troubled spirit, a broken and a contrite heart, O Lord, Thou wilt not despise. Come unto Me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly, and ye shall find rest unto your souls."

And then there was another silence, after which she said—"I wish mamma was here, Arthur dear. I do not know what to say; but it is Jesus that speaks these words to those who are sorrowful. Listen to Him. He is but waiting to be gracious. Call on Him, then He will come and abide with you, and comfort you, and save you from everything that 'is evil.'" Tears at last choked

the trembling voice, and, for the first time, a sort of feeling came over Rachel that she ought not to have been standing there. Instinctively she turned to move away, but as she turned, her eyes met those of Mrs. Ferguson, who was standing at the top of the staircase, and, at the same time, Rachel saw that just behind her stood the Rector, Mr. Gilmonby. Surprised as the housekeeper was to see Rachel there, she was too much afraid of causing any noise to express her wonder, and she only made a signal for Rachel to move out of the way, and, as she passed, gave her a little push in the direction of downstairs. Rachel had not reached the passage before the housekeeper overtook her, and asked, in a suppressed tone—"Where in the world did you spring from, Rachel Bovill, and how happened you to be up there?"

"Grandmother sent me," began Rachel, but corrected herself to—"Grandmother told me to ask you how Master Arthur was. Her respects, and she is very anxious. It was Mrs. Pickhill told me to come up to look for you."

"I think she might have come herself," observed the housekeeper. "Don't you know, child, that the least disturbance might be the death of Master Arthur? However, to give you your due, you seemed to be quiet enough. You were more like a ghost than anything else when I caught sight of you. How did you come?"

"I walked, ma'am," replied Rachel.

"And are you going back by yourself, child, at this time of night? I wonder at your grandmother—but I suppose, like all the rest of us, she is half distracted; and I came without a cap myself, and had to appear in my bonnet until I could find some one at liberty to go for it.

Well, tell your grandmother, Rachel, that things are nearly as bad as they can be, there was no chance till this evening ; but the last message Miss Beresford sent, was to give a little hope, I trust it may not turn out false, to my poor mistress. You could have heard there, child ; I wonder Mrs. Bovill didn't think of that, at least, I might have wondered at any other time."

First sharp, and then tender, in her words, the good housekeeper might well say that they were all half distracted.

"Grandmother did send me to the Hall," put in Rachel, in her honesty, "but, as you weren't there, I came on here. I wanted to come."

"I dare say you did," replied Mrs. Ferguson ; "but we didn't want you, and poor Mrs. Bovill left by herself all this time. I'd advise you to get back as fast as you can ; I have some things to send by old Gregory, so just wait till I get them ready, and he will walk with you as far as Middleton. Sit down outside there, it is warm enough."

As the housekeeper bustled away with quick, stealthy steps, Rachel moved to the door and looked out towards the village. It was near sunset, and she saw the sky, lighted up with gold and deep rosy tints over the dark, thick mass of wood, and fading off into the most lovely tints, above her head. I fear that Rachel had no thought of God who made it all, nor of the glories of the heaven beyond, in which He dwells, but she felt its beauty, and for a few minutes stood quite fascinated by the changing but still beautiful picture ; then, turning round, she gave one glance at the gray, silent house, and suddenly moved off towards the wood. "I shan't wait," she had said to

herself, "it would be ever so late before I got home, and what should old Gregory go with me for? Mrs. Ferguson's so fidgetty and fanciful." She did not forget to watch the sky, but it was not long before her quick, active footsteps brought her under the shadow of the wood, and by a little gate she entered the rugged path that led towards Middleton. There were no primroses now, nor flowers of any kind except a straggling bit of honeysuckle here and there; but there were large beds of the graceful bracken fern, and many pretty plants for one who had leisure to admire them—which certainly was not Rachel. Her object was to get home as fast as possible, that she might not be obliged to accommodate her steps to those of Gregory, nor to be indebted to him for his escort, so the grass did not grow much under her nimble feet. The path was rather roundabout, for sometimes it diverged to avoid an old gravel pit, of which there were several; but there was no chance of missing it as long as the light remained, and, after some time, Rachel arrived at a part which was more open, and where a low wall, covered with ferns and ivy, crossed the path and ran down the wood. Here she once more caught a glimpse of the glowing-sky through the interlaced branches of some high beech-trees, and even as she crossed the narrow stile, she kept her eyes fixed on what had charmed her so. Probably that made her movements awkward; at any rate her foot slipped just as she had cleared the stile, and her frock catching on the old stump of a tree, and then giving way again, she was thrown, rather violently, down a bank where the ground sloped suddenly. In broad daylight, and in the midst of her companions, Rachel would have laughed at the idea of tumbling down here, but this

was no laughing matter. She had no time to save herself, and she fell in a most awkward position with her whole weight upon one leg twisted under her, and she was at first quite stunned. As soon as she recovered a little she tried to rise, but the pain of her first effort made her sick and faint ; and although she tried again, it was with the same result, and at last she was obliged to give up trying and to acknowledge that she was unable to help herself. The thought of old Gregory behind her, now came with something like comfort ; it was certain he would come this way, Mrs. Ferguson would send him after her, and then she should receive assistance, otherwise she did not know what she should do, and even her brave heart turned within her as she contemplated the chance of remaining, probably all night, out in the wood in such pain and alone. At first the birds were carolling their evening hymns of praise, some in a gentle twitter, some with loud, full notes, filling the air with luscious cadences ; but one by one they dropped into silence, and whilst the gorgeous colours in the sky had faded off, with the growing twilight a chilliness seemed to wrap her coldly.

In this still hour, compelled for the time to submit entirely to the misfortune that had befallen her, Rachel's mind turned back to the scene she had so lately witnessed, and the thought came across her, should not Master Arthur's feelings be her own, and doubly so ? When the heart is once touched with the sense of its own sin, beholding in the light of the presence of God, how great and overpowering is the knowledge ! "I have sinned against Heaven, and before Thee." It may be pride, it may be disobedience, it may be untruth, but whatever

the particular naughtiness that presses upon the conscience, the feeling is the same—that of deep abasement in the sight of Him who is too pure to behold iniquity. Well is it, if, with the momentary excitement, the feeling does not pass away; if the sinner yielding still further to the Holy Spirit which is striving in his soul, is led even to the foot of the blessed cross, and left there to gaze upwards to the Holy Lamb slain from the beginning of the world, who alone can give help, and holiness, and life.

The minutes were hours to poor Rachel as she lay thus oppressed with pain and sadness. Old Gregory did not come, and no human help seemed near. Darkness gathered round her, and a strange numbness was creeping over her, when a sound like that of a footstep fell upon her ear. It was yet far off, but what did that matter so long as it was coming? Rachel raised herself upon her elbow, so that she could turn her head in the direction of the sound, but the effort made her dizzy, and just as the welcome step stopped at the other side of the stile, she lost all consciousness in faintness. Mr. Gilmonby might easily have passed without observing her, for his eyes were straight before him, and his thoughts preoccupied, but God had brought him to help Rachel, and attracted by the dangerous state of the path-way after he had crossed the stile, he stopped, and looking down the bank, caught sight of the prostrate figure of the poor girl. With an exclamation of surprise, he quickly made his way down to her, and touching her very gently raised her from the ground. The movement roused her, she opened her eyes, groaned, and then burst into tears and sobs.

"I am afraid you are very much hurt," said Mr. Gilmonby, speaking most kindly.

In Rachel's dreamy state she seemed to think herself still at church when she heard the voice, but she soon came more to herself, and in answer to the Rector's next question, she said,—

"I fell down here, sir, and I could not help myself!" and then she sobbed again.

"Never mind now, my girl," said the rector, "it is Rachel Bovill, is it not? Lay your head here on my arm, and cry a little while if you like, it will do you good. I am very glad I came this way. I had very nearly gone round by the Elm Cottages, but I thought I had best take the shorter way."

It was best indeed. The rector had by this time contrived with one hand to extract from his pocket a small flask of wine, and he now put a few drops in Rachel's mouth, by which she was much revived. He then tried to help her to stand upright, but that was difficult, for one foot was useless.

"It is badly sprained at least," said he. "Are you very heavy? I can carry my own little boy when he is tired, but you are twice as tall. However, let me try."

He was only a slender man, but his willingness seemed to give him strength, and taking her in his arms, he carried her for some distance.

"Sir," said Rachel at last, "I shall be sadly tiring you. Old Gregory from the hall is coming this way, and he will help."

"I fear not," said Mr. Gilmonby, "Gregory Baines crossed the fields for the high road just before I turned into the wood, but do *not* fear for me; I can easily carry

you some distance further. We will, however, rest here a little, and then we shall soon be within reach of the North Lodge."

He laid Rachel gently down on the bank that sloped from the path just here, and sat beside her to rest himself.

"I think I saw you at church this afternoon," he said, wishing probably to divert her thoughts from the pain that was now much troubling her.

"Yes, sir," said Rachel, "and I heard what you said, but I didn't care much then, but I have seen Master Arthur, and oh! sir."

There was not much explanation in these incoherent words, but Mr. Gilmonby knew more about her than she thought, although he had only been three months in the parish, and his experience made him guess the rest; and when in a few strong passionate words she made him further understand what her mind was full of, he felt the strongest interest in her, and under that dim autumn sky, and in the solitude of Corby Wood, he spoke precious guiding words to her, and whilst he pointed her to the Good Shepherd, in his heart he prayed that this wandering lamb might be brought back to the fold, before she further strayed.

It was a startling thing for Mrs. Bovill when her evening of suspense was ended by the appearance of Mr. Gilmonby and John Ellis from the Lodge, bearing Rachel's languid form between them. But the sight of real trouble when it brought necessity for action, was easier to her than suspense apart from it, and in a moment she was able to give directions for Rachel's relief, as well as to speak the most soothing words for her comfort. Mrs. Ellis, unable to leave her own children

had, however, despatched a message to Mary Bean, and she, hastening her footsteps with the zeal that her kind heart prompted, arrived almost before the rector had explained the circumstances that Rachel herself was too much exhausted to relate. Once having seen the poor girl in Mary's skilful hands, Mr. Gilmonby and his helper were set at liberty ; and as the messenger who summoned Mary Bean, had been also sent to beg Master Arthur's doctor to come on to Middleton as soon as possible, there was no more for them to do, and with some words of sympathy, and offers of any help the rector could furnish, the kind pastor took his leave. When the doctor did arrive, which was not until a long and trying hour had passed, Rachel's sufferings began anew, and, although he informed them that there would be no lasting injury to the leg, there was no doubt that it would be some time before she would be able to move about with any ease. The grandmother's grief for her was not lessened by the report of Master Arthur. As yet there was no improvement that could be relied upon, and there was much fear that Mr. Beresford's arrival, which was expected every minute, might only be in time for him to witness his son's death. It was a dreadful night for poor Mrs. Bovill, Rachel tossing, groaning, and at times talking rapidly about Master Arthur, the sunset, the wood, and things to which her grandmother and Mary Bean had little clue, and added to this her anxiety for those two young creatures who were almost dearer to her than Rachel. There was nothing for her comfort except prayer ; happily that had been her daily, nay hourly habit for many years, and she now reaped the precious reward of finding that the Lord upon whom she had

always called was indeed a sure refuge in time of trouble.

With the morning's light came better news. Mr. Beresford had arrived in violent and excessive grief as might have been expected, but he brought with him a physician whose report was by no means hopeless, and Miss Beatie's calmness had received its first shake in the tidings that it was possible youth and strength might triumph over the fearful injuries Master Arthur had received. The close of that long weary day confirmed the physician's auguries, and although there were many ups and downs, many times when his nurses could scarcely credit the existence of real hope, still a few more days turned it into comparative certainty, and feeble, suffering as he still remained, Master Arthur could be pronounced out of danger. Meanwhile, the patient nearer at hand, though not an object of so great anxiety, was truly in need of great pity. A girl who had scarcely had a headache in all her life to be suddenly full of pains all over her, one so active and independent to be at once laid helpless,—it was to be supposed that she would be what Mrs. Stubbs called "a heavy handful" for any one who had her to nurse. So Mary had expected, but it is strange, as she remarked to her father, "how quiet the most rough-tempered people are when laid up with illness."

"They can't help themselves," said Jacob, with a laugh.

"I don't think it's all that," said Mary, reflecting as she stirred her tea, "but you know, father, Rachel Bovill was one of the most provoking girls I ever saw in my life, so contradictory (it was a long time before Mary

got this word out, but her father was used to waiting for her), she would have her own way in everything, it was but to propose one plan to make her stick to another through thick and thin. I have often wondered how her grandmother had patience with her, but now it's 'just as you like, Mary,' and 'thank you,' for things she would mightily have kicked at before."

"If it troubles you, my dear," replied her father, "wait till she's about again, and I'll warrant you'll have Rachel as rampagious as ever; she is a high-spirited lass by nature, rather different to what you ever were, Mary."

Jacob spoke carelessly, but he finished with a glance of affection, for although he often could not follow where her thoughts went, he thought there was no one equal to her.

The time for trying Rachel came long before she was about again; when she felt pretty well, and yet was obliged to lie inactive, and afterwards, when she could only sit, and be thankful for the improvement, in a chair near the open door. For it was weeks before she had the use of her legs again. But this was a blessed time for her. Had she been soon strong, and able to move about as usual, the good impressions she had received might have been choked or weakened or cast aside, as it was there was everything to strengthen them. Her eyes had been opened, her heart humbled, and she was now able to receive the things that belonged to her eternal peace, and to profit by any instruction that was offered to her. All her jealousy of Miss Beatie had vanished, and on that joyous day when Master Arthur was well enough for her to come and see her beloved nurse, Rachel wondered how she could ever have been vexed with the young lady

who was now so beautiful in her eyes. It was only timidly that Miss Beatie ventured to speak to Rachel, and express her sympathy with her accident ; but when she found that, instead of rude and scornful replies, she met with respectful and even grateful answers, she gave way to all the kindness of her heart, and there was soon a regard between the young lady and the cottage girl which would not easily be weakened. It may be supposed how delightful all this was to Mrs. Bovill. She saw Rachel continually trying to improve herself, she knew that she was always wishing to check the rampant weed which still, at times, sprang up and tempted her, in different forms, to pride and self-assertion ; and she saw that the kind visits of Mr. Gilmonby were always precious to her. How different from the Rachel to whom a word of counsel had always been like the sounding of the trumpet to a war-horse ! Meanwhile the time drew near when the confirmation was to take place, and many hopes and fears were struggling in Rachel's breast. She told Mr. Gilmonby that she thought she should never be good enough to take upon her the solemn promises that he was explaining to her ; but then she heard that she was already dedicated to God's service, that it was strength to perform her service well, she must seek in this ordinance, and that it was a singleness of heart, not perfect goodness, that was asked of her,—and she was encouraged. There were times, too, when she would kick against the pricks as it were, say to herself that it was all stuff, that she couldn't be religious, and she wouldn't try ; and then she would be saucy to her grandmother, and neglectful of her daily duties—but it was not for long, the sad time of contrition would return, and more humbly she would start

afresh. Poor untrained Rachel ! How different seemed Miss Beatie's course ! More grave, perhaps, than before, more earnest, more trustful, embracing all opportunities of instruction, trying, ever trying to know more of her Saviour ; timidly, yet earnestly desirous of the time when she too should be confirmed, and receive upon her pure desires the full blessing of God. She might be compared to the clear stream that dances and laughs in the sunshine near its source, but will flow deeper and more tranquilly as it nears the great river that is to carry it to the sea.

"Till in the ocean of Thy love,
We lose ourselves in Heaven above."

When the Confirmation Day drew near, Mrs. Bovill wrote to her son John, to invite him and his wife, if they could make it convenient, to come over for the occasion. Her infirmities would prevent her being present, and she should like some of her relations, she said, to be with Rachel. No answer arrived, but John was known to be a poor and unwilling letter-writer, so their coming remained uncertain until only the evening before, when as Rachel was sitting before the window doing up a frilled cap for her grandmother, she cried out, "There is father and Sally, I declare," and knocking the tallying iron over with her vehemence, she got up to go and meet them. But her movements could not keep pace with her desires, and before she could reach the door, Sally was kissing her. It was a joyful meeting, the girls had not seen each other for nearly two years, and at first they could do nothing but shake hands, and laugh, until their excitement had passed off in exclamations of mutual surprise at the growth and alteration in each other. "You're quite a

woman, Sally." "I should think so, ain't I going on eighteen, and been out these two years come Martinmas? But I'm tired of place—it's so slaving. But sure, Rachel, I shouldn't ha' known you, you're so tall, and you look quite genteel. I suppose you'll be up a good deal with the servants at the Hall?"

"Oh no," said Rachel, "I never go there except an errand."

"Don't you? Wouldn't I though? I expect to have rare fun if—but I forgot, mum's the word. Father, should you have known our Rachel?"

The father had been having his talk apart with Mrs. Bovill, but thus called upon, he turned round, patted Rachel on the shoulder and said kindly, "I am sorry to hear you have been so bad, my girl," and with that there had to be an account of everything, and all about Master Arthur too, and there was no lack of talk round Mrs. Bovill's hearth that night.

The service next day was to be at two o'clock. Rachel, in spite of her pleasure in her sister's visit, would have been glad of a little time to herself before she went to church, but it was not easy to manage—there was so much to do, and besides Sally slept with her, and all the morning the sister bustled about with her, watching Rachel's ways with wonder, for Rachel had been the unhandy one at home, nothing expected of her, indeed; so now Sally laughed at her in a way that would have provoked a quarrel not long ago, and then laughed again because she took it as she did. She would see the gown, and cap too, and make her remarks upon them in a way that was grieving to Rachel, but it was all the easier to bear that her mind was filled with the importance, not of

wearing her neat cap, and the new gown, although it was her first long one, but of the profession she was about to make, and the blessing she was going to receive. At last the morning was over. Sally, good-natured enough, had offered to tidy up whilst Rachel got ready, and was so quick about it, that Rachel had not finished dressing when she joined her. "Well, really now, you do look nice. Not but what I thought when I was confirmed, if it was to do over again, I should have liked a veil, so graceful. Eliza and Mary Saunders, the butcher's daughters next door, they had veils, but then they're great, red, turned-up-nosed things. Now I flatter myself," and so speaking, Sally turned her buxom figure round before the little looking-glass as much as to add, "with me, it would be quite different."

"Please don't, Sally," said Rachel, with an imploring look. "I'm trying not to think about my things, only about church, and what's coming."

"Oh, that's it, is it? So, grandmother's made you one of her sort, well it can't be helped. Don't look sorrowful, my dear, there now," and Sally, giddy, thoughtless, but good-natured, gave Rachel a rough, hearty kiss, and preceded her downstairs.

Their father was waiting for them in his Sunday suit, and saying that he feared they might be late, he set off towards the door directly he saw them, and Sally followed him. Rachel only paused a moment to receive a few whispered words from her grandmother, and then she went too, but as she was about to leave the house, she almost ran against Miss Beatie, who had just alighted from the carriage and was coming in to see her dear old nurse for a moment on her way. Again she was in white,

only this time her fair hair was gathered underneath her modest cap, and the sorrowful look was gone, and only the simplicity and peace the same as ever ; and while Rachel curtsayed and passed on to join her father, more vividly than ever did that sweet voice come back to her ears, and once more she seemed to hear the holy words, "Lord, I am not high-minded, I have no proud looks. Oh Israel, trust in the Lord, from this time forth, for evermore."

The service was over, the young lady and Rachel had gone their different ways, and the village was returning to its usual quietness. It had been arranged that John Bovill and his daughter should return that evening, and Jacob Bean had kindly offered to give them a lift to the railway station. John appeared to have something on his mind, but it was not until they were sitting after tea, that he ventured to propound it. "Mother," he said, "I have left it to the last, but I have a proposal to make, but only to see if it meets your approbation. You see Sally, silly wench, has had enough of place, and she has rather a fancy to come and stay with you, and having had some experience, there is no doubt but what she would be more useful to you than this young lass, though she has sprung up so tall, so what I mean is, shall Rachel go home with me, and Sally stay?"

Mrs. Bovill looked quite startled from one to another until her eyes rested on Rachel's pale face. "Do you want to leave me, Rachel?" she said.

"No, grandmother," and her truthful, affectionate eyes told the rest.

"Then I will not part with you. No, John, thank you. I will not deny that there have been times when

Rachel has not been the help that she might have been, but those times, please God, have passed away for ever. I am obliged to Sally for her offer, but Rachel being my god-child, and used to me, and I to her, with your leave, John, there shall be no changing."

"Very well, mother ; then, Sally, get your bonnet on, and we'll be off. I'm truly glad to hear that Rachel is improving in her ways, as she is in her looks, and if you like to have her, well ; as I told you before, we're glad she should be here. And so good bye, for there's Jacob, and his horse doesn't like standing." Rachel kissed her father and Sally, and she saw them mount into the tax-cart, and she watched them turn into the lane, and waved her hand to them, and then she turned back into the house, and going up to her grandmother, she put her hand in hers.

"You'll not repent staying with me, Rachel ?"

"No, grandmother," said Rachel, earnestly.

"To be my help and comfort, honey."

"That is what I shall try to be, grandmother, God helping me," said Rachel, softly.

And when in after years, Rachel stood beside the peaceful death-bed of her grandmother, she felt with humble thankfulness that she had kept her word.

Mary Corner.

"Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted."

"Pray, pray, thou who only weepest,
And the drops will slacken so."

GOOD morning, Mary," said Mr. Gresham, the kind-looking rector of Wallington, to a modest-looking girl whom he met in his morning's walk. "I was afraid you were not well, for I missed you at evening service yesterday."

"Yes, sir," said Mary, blushing and hesitating.

"We miss those most whom we are accustomed most to see," continued Mr. Gresham, kindly; "but I suppose we must not expect to see you much longer."

"No, sir," said Mary, blushing again; then she added rather suddenly, "Miles was here yesterday, sir, and he would not let me leave him; and oh, please, sir, would you be so kind as to be the one to marry us? Miles says he won't wait any longer than May, and this is the 21st of April, and my mother could not refuse him."

"Nor some one else either, I guess," said Mr. Gresham, smiling. "Yes, Mary, you may depend upon me, please God, and my best wishes shall go with you; but, my dear child," and Mr. Gresham's smile changed into a more

serious expression as he looked upon the fair yielding girl before him, "you must let me give you also a little piece of advice to take with you. When you promise to obey Miles Corner, remember that you have already made a higher promise, which your love for him must never lead you to break. Your duty towards God must come first, not second; and what you know to be right in God's sight, must never be given up because Miles wishes so. I am not afraid of your being an undutiful wife, Mary, you have been too good a daughter for that; but I am anxious lest you should yield from earthly love, or for a moment's peace, what, for your own soul's sake, and for Miles Corner's welfare too, you should hold fast. Be brave, Mary, 'strong in the might of the Lord;' for there is no other strength for you."

The words of her beloved pastor sank deep into Mary's heart; but she was young, and ignorant of the ways of the world, and Miles Corner was everything to her. She believed what Mr. Gresham told her, she had always done so; but Miles would never want her to do anything wicked. So it was all right, and the placid smile that such unusual thoughts had for a moment or two disturbed, came back again, and singing softly to herself like the birds around her, Mary crossed the fields towards her mother's home.

Three weeks later, and Mary Standish had left that home as Miles Corner's wife; and, after a few days spent at Scarborough, she was taken to her new dwelling-place in the little country town in Yorkshire where her husband had already lived for years. He was a writer in the office of one of the first solicitors in the neighbourhood, and he was a prudent, saving man. Part of his

salary had been laid by from the first quarter of his receiving one, and he was now able to bring Mary to such a home as she felt her mother might be proud enough to see her in. People had said it would be a great change for Mary from a farm-house, with all its plenty, fresh air, and freedom, to a town life; but that evening, when she stood in the little garden, with its border of spring flowers, its beds of vegetables, the gooseberry trees, and the plum tree in the corner, just covered with its clustering blossoms; and when she looked beyond the garden, over the churchyard, to the sparkling river and the woods beyond, she had not a regret for the past, nor a wish for the present; her sole feeling was one of contentment with her position, her sole desire that she might make Miles comfortable. And with the sunshine of love in her eyes, she could not see a possible cloud in the future. Thus brightly began her married life, and it seemed, indeed, as if it must go on for ever so. It was true that even, after the first few days, Miles would sometimes look gloomy; but it was his business that tried him, and, like a good wife, she strove to cheer him. Cross words came to his lips sometimes; but then she only sought to soothe him; and how could a harshness or gloominess remain, when such sweet eyes looked up to him, or how could he let a burst of anger disturb the smiling contentment, which was in itself the sweetest flattery to her husband. There was little occasion, indeed, for anger or jarrings of opinions. Miles was absent for long hours in his master's office, and though Mary always longed for the sight of him again, she busied herself meanwhile in her household duties; and the peace and comfort that he found on his return

softened the natural ruggedness of his disposition, and the husband remained the lover still. He was a man of intelligence, and had embraced every means of improvement within his power; and what could be pleasanter than opening his stores of learning to the village girl, who thought no one so wise, and whose docile ignorance was but a new charm to him. On one subject alone Miles never talked and Mary never asked questions, and that was religion. Her timidity, and perhaps an unconfessed feeling that Miles would not like it, made her avoid the subject; and what should have been a sweetest bond of union, was wanting in their intercourse. Still Mary Corner was a proud and happy wife.

One day, after they had been married about two months, Miles, when he came in to dinner, said, "Mary, how would you like to go into the country for a day?"

"Very well," answered she, pausing in her occupation of pouring potatoes from the pan. "Where too, Miles?"

"You know," said he, "or at least you've heard me speak of Cousin James at Redlands. He has been in to-day about some little business. He's churchwarden this year, it seems—a nice trouble he finds it, I expect—and he says both he and his wife are very desirous to see you, and he fixed Sunday for us to spend with them."

"Very kind, I'm sure," said Mary, looking somewhat flushed and shy, but sharing in her husband's pleasure; for she knew that Miles was proud of his rich cousin James, and that it was through him Miles had been placed with Mr. Walker. "How far is it?"

"Ten miles by the road," he answered; "but we shall go by rail—take return tickets; it's only a mile or so from the station, and I told them you were a good walker."

"Are we to stay all night, then?" asked Mary.

"Nay, nay," said Miles. "Start at nine, be there at ten. You fancy you're going back to Farnfield, I suppose."

"But it would be Sunday travelling," said Mary.

Her husband's face changed in a moment. The pleasant smile with which he had been looking down upon her was gone. "Cant!" he said, angrily. "Leave such rubbish for the parsons."

It was Mary's first experience of her husband's real temper, as well as the first time in which he had spoken so freely of what she had been accustomed to reverence, and she was utterly silenced. With tears in her eyes, she placed the dinner upon the table, and they sat down; but Miles was too fond of her not to notice her sudden sadness, and his anger being quite momentary, he said, "Come, Molly, you don't mind me being short, do you?"

A bright, watery smile was the reply. He launched forth again about Redlands and his arrangements. Mary made no more objections, and the little cloud passed over.

Sunday morning, at nine o'clock, found Miles and Mary at the station, ready for the starting of the train. Miles in good spirits; Mary fluttered with the importance of their expedition, and looking very pretty in her still fresh and clean straw bonnet trimmed with white, the thin shawl, and lilac silk, that had been her wedding-dress.

Their fellow-passengers were chiefly men, and none of them of very reputable appearance; but Mary scarcely looked at them, and about half an hour brought them to the station where they had to get out. It was but a

roadside one, of little importance, and the station-master the only human being within sight, seemed rather surprised than otherwise to see any one alight; however, they gave him no trouble, merely showed their return tickets, and then passed through the little booking-place to the road behind, which was as quiet as the station.

The sun had much power already, and they were glad to turn into a lane where the high hedges, now fragrant with roses and woodbine, and the trees at intervals, afforded some shelter from its rays. They walked rather quickly, in spite of the heat, and without much conversation, for Miles seldom talked about little passing things, and even the pleasure of once more being in the country could not prevent Mary from being pre-occupied with the thoughts of the visit she was about to pay. They soon turned into another and more shady lane, the end of which opened into the fields, and just as they were going through the gate, that led into the first of them, the sound of three church-bells came jingling jangling on the breeze. Mary started.

"We shall, maybe, be late for church," she said. "Is it far from Redlands, Miles? Oh, there, I see a tower just above the trees. That is where the sound comes from. D'ye see it, Miles, over there? They are not near so sweet as our bells, and yet I like to hear them. D'ye see it, Miles?"

"Did I never see a church before?" said he; then, half-ashamed of his own roughness, he added, hastily: "Come along, Mary, they'll have been looking for us for some time. The train was late. Redlands is just at the back of yon first hill."

Mary's mind seemed full of things she did not like to

say, and she only looked in the direction towards which her husband pointed, and quickened her footsteps. It was certainly more than a mile from the station, more than two perhaps, but they reached the farmhouse at last. It was a substantial stone building, with a small garden, surrounded by a low wall and railings in front, and a good-sized farmyard behind, with a rick of large, well-made stacks close by. A russet apple-tree was trained against the house, and a climbing, clustering rose overhung the lower windows, and took off the plainness of the square stone house. A barking of dogs had already announced the approach of visitors, and the inhabitants were prepared to welcome them. Cousin James himself was a tall, portly man, with a good-natured, easy face. His wife—who looked somewhat harassed, as if the better half of her attention was still with her household cares—was rather a thin and sharp-faced woman; but she came forward first to open the front gate, and her words were very hospitable.

“Come in, come in,” said she, “we have been expecting you this half-hour and more; and how are you, Miles?” she continued, as they shook hands.

“And this is Mrs. Miles? You are kindly welcome, I’m sure.”


Mary’s hand was next shaken, in the most cordial manner, by Cousin James, and she was led into the sitting-room, which was at one side of the narrow passage by which they entered the house, the other side opening into a more ordinary parlour. Here, upon the table in the middle of the room, was a tray spread with a neat white cloth, containing both wine and cake, and the more *homely* refreshments of bread and cheese and beer.

Without a moment's pause these were warmly pressed upon them.

"Come, you'll be thirsty after your walk, if not hungry. Have a bit of cake. It is quite plain, our Grace's own making, and, as she is not here, I may say it's sure to be good—for she never fails."

Both the travellers were fain to take advantage of the good things spread before them, though not, perhaps, to the extent that their host and hostess would have liked; indeed, Mary was too shy yet to eat in comfort, and not the less so when Cousin James, after saying in vain—"Now, just a drop more—a bite of cheese then"—took Miles off to see some new draining he was proud of, and left her quite alone with her new relation. Perhaps Mrs. Corner was not much less shy in the company of the young girl, whose fair face flushed up every time she had to speak, and whose blue eyes were seldom raised from the table beside which she was so stiffly sitting. An unsatisfactory sort of conversation was kept up between them for a short time, when a bright thought struck Mrs. Corner, and she said—"Will you come and take your bonnet off? You'll not mind going to look over the place just now, after your long walk?" And then she led the way out of the room by a second door, and took Mary across a large hall, or best kitchen, and upstairs into a chamber where every drapery was of snowy whiteness, and a pleasant scent of lavender perceptible.

"You'll find living in Moortown very confined after the country," she remarked, when she had opened the window to let in that small portion of air which some old-fashioned, frugal housewives think quite sufficient; "but it will be much gayer, doubtless."



"I like Moortown very well," answered Mary, with one of her pretty blushes, "but I am pleased to be in the country again."

"You'll know a lot of people, most likely," said Mrs. Corner, kindly taking her shawl and spreading it upon the bed; "Miles has been so long settled in the town, and young men make acquaintances fast."

"I don't know," said Mary. "I don't go out much to see anybody."

"But he mustn't confine you," said Mrs. Corner, with a sort of reproach. "You are but pale."

"He doesn't," answered Mary, eagerly; "I am a deal in the garden, and we go out walking when Miles has time. I am very strong, but I was never one to have much colour."

"Well, I hope so," remarked Mrs. Corner, doubtfully. "You're not pale now. Are you one of a large family?" Then followed a catechism about her mother and her home, kept up on the one side with a kind of good-natured curiosity, and replied to, pleasantly, by Mary, who was fast losing her first awkwardness, and liked to speak of things and people she loved so well; when, suddenly, a strong smell of burnt fat, from the lower premises, changed the subject.

"Oh, my dear, excuse *me*, but that foolish Jane is letting the pigeon pie boil over. I told Grace she would. Grace was up at five this morning to see that everything was got ready, and she declared that any girl might mind the dinner after that; but I knew better. They're not to be trusted with a cup of milk to boil. They're sure to bishop it. I'll see you down these crooked stairs, and then, if you'll excuse *me*, I must look after her."

Mary begged that she might not stand in Mrs. Corner's way, and asked if she could help.

"Oh, no, thank you, my dear; Grace has got everything ready, even to laying the cloth, before she went to church; but it's only this stupid girl can't see further than her nose."

"It is past church-time then?" said Mary, timidly, and feeling that it was a very foolish question.

Mrs. Corner, for reply, only pointed with her finger to the great clock that stood in the large kitchen, through which they were passing. It was half-past eleven, and Mary coloured at the idea of having appeared to think it could possibly be still church-time; but Mrs. Corner, as she opened the door of the sitting-room for Mary to go in, said: "I don't wonder at your asking, for Sunday morning is over before it is begun, I say, however long the afternoons may be; and as for getting done to go every Sunday morning, it's not to be thought of, particularly with this girl of ours, even if it wasn't for my rheumatism, which keeps me back. Grace goes,—she'd not be herself if she didn't; but that's different. She's of that sort. I tell her she begins to get ready on Monday morning for next Sunday, and she only laughs in her quiet way, and says: "I believe, aunt, I do."

The "Aunt" rather enlightened Mary as to the position this mysterious Grace occupied in the house; but still, when she went and stood by herself at the window and looked out into the little garden with its small grass-plot and borders of sweet flowers, and over the railing into the pasture, and the flat, but pleasant prospect of green hedgerows and fields beyond, her mind still ran upon this Grace, and she pictured her to herself as a tall,

prim, disagreeable personage, and thought perhaps that might be the reason Miles had never spoken of her.

Meanwhile Mrs. Corner bustled in and out, trying to attend at the same time to her guest and the "girl," in whom, it was plain, she placed no confidence.

"You're far best without, my dear," she said, on being told that a weekly char to wash was all the help that Mary had. "I'm right glad to hear that you're so sensible, for besides, that young people should be active, and do for themselves, you never know where you are when there's a young girl breaking half the things she lays her hands on, and eating her head off at the same time."

After this a talk about household matters in general seemed quite natural, during which Mrs. Corner gave the young wife much good advice, and offered her all manner of recipes, more particularly one for home-made vinegar, which had been used by the Corner family for generations. They had their heads together, when Miles and Cousin James came in.

"You seem quite thick you two," said the latter. "Oh, it's grandmother's recipe-book, is it; then you're sure to be all right;" whilst the other husband smiled his best smile to see his Mary so appreciated.

"We'll not disturb you," continued Cousin James; and he sat down near the window, and invited Miles to do the same; not that he ever cared for sitting long, except after dinner or supper for a while, when he had his pipe or a warm fireside, for he was accustomed to a very active life.

"Isn't the dinner ready, Missus?" he asked, after a few minutes' sitting with his hands before him.

"Grace hasn't come back yet," replied his wife; "besides it's not gone one o'clock."

"Bless that girl," said Mr. Corner, with a little laugh. "She'd have to be churchwarden and all to-day, I think. Hollo, speak of the old gentleman, why, here she is."

Mary looked up, and saw a neat figure in a white bonnet and black silk mantle standing in the doorway, evidently cousin Grace. She was middle size, with a nice-shaped smooth face, dark-brown hair, and a grave look; it might be that she had heard her uncle's loud remark, and did not like it. Miles and she shook hands at once. "I wonder he never told me she was here," passed through Mary's mind; but he was naming her to Mary; Cousin Grace, he called her, not that they were really cousins, for Miles was Mr. Corner's cousin, whilst Grace was his wife's niece, but enough to call her so; and Mary and she shook hands, and she said it was a hot day for their walk from the station. Then almost directly she went through the room to go and take her things off, and they did not see her again until she came to say that dinner was on the table. They all went into the other room, where a bountiful meal was set out for them, and pressed upon the strangers, though Mary noticed that whilst Mr. and Mrs. Corner did all the pressing, Grace appeared to manage everything, and take all the trouble off her aunt.

Both host and hostess made much of Mary, and when dinner was over, Cousin James would take her to see a calf which he declared was the greatest beauty in the neighbourhood; and after admiring it, they strolled round the farmyard before they came back into the garden.

Here Grace paid her first attentions to Mary, by picking her a few sprigs of lavender, and asking her if she liked the smell of it. Mary then first noticed that she had a sweet smile, and a little conversation sprang up between them; but Mary was shy, and it did not get on well. At last Grace said—

“I wonder if aunt and uncle are going to church.”

“Oh, is there afternoon church here?” said Mary, with an eager look.

“Yes, at three o’clock,” replied the other. “You would like to go, wouldn’t you?”

“Yes, that I should,” said Mary, far more heartily than she had spoken yet.

“It is nearly time to get ready,” said Grace. “Will you come upstairs with me?”

Mary hesitated a moment; then she followed Grace, who took her upstairs, and helped her to get ready in the kindest way, and talked all the time about the pretty village church, and the sweet hymns the school-children sang, and their good clergyman, Mr. Lonsdale.

“Now,” she said, when Mary’s shawl had been arranged in the neatest folds, “now I must go and get aunt’s bonnet out. It is rather a long walk for her since she had the rheumatism, but I think she’ll be able to manage it to-day. Look, this is our hymn-book;” and leaving it in Mary’s hands, Grace disappeared.

When she came back, it was with a quietly disappointed air. “Aunt doesn’t feel equal to the walk to-day,” she said; “and uncle wants to show Cousin Miles the new house the Squire is building. You know Miles’s father was schoolmaster there. I told them you were going to church with me.”

"Did you?" said Mary, with a half-frightened look. "Did Miles want me?"

"I suppose he did," answered Grace, with an attempt, though a poor one, at a joking smile. "But we'd better go down. Uncle said we could walk part way together."

When the two girls reached the parlour, they found that, with some lack of politeness, the men had already set off.

"They're only in the pasture, honeys," said Mrs. Corner; "walk on, and you'll soon overtake them. If Mr. Lonsdale asks after me, Grace, you can say that my rheumatism troubles me at times."

"Very well, aunt," answered Grace, as she and Mary passed through the garden-gate. They walked quickly, and soon came up with Miles and Mr. Corner, who were only lounging, and scarcely quickened their pace after the girls had joined them, but stopped occasionally, as they talked, to look around them.

When they had crossed a field or two, they came within sound of the church-bells that Mary had heard in the morning, and Grace said to her: "I think we shall have to go on, or else we shall hardly be in time."

"Very well," said Mary, and, without thinking, she made a step or two in advance; but then she stopped, and looked back at Miles.

He broke off in the middle of a sentence, and said: "What is it?"

"I was going to church with—with your cousin," answered Mary, in a timid sort of tone, just the sort of thing to annoy Miles, particularly when at the same time he probably knew that he was doing wrong; and he said to Mary, in a low tone, but stern enough: "We are going

to the Squire's," and he pointed towards the village; "let her go her own way."

Mary's heart was in her mouth, her mind in a confusion of indecision; for a moment she thought of expostulating; but, that past, she ran after Grace, and said, in a tone she could not help being rather piteous: "Please don't mind me; I am going to stay with Miles."

"Are you?" said Grace, rather sharply; but as she turned, she caught sight of two blue, watery eyes; so, with only one glance back at Miles, she added, quite tenderly: "I am sorry, I should have thought you should have come. However, good-bye. You will not take it unkind my leaving you. You are with your husband."

Mary did not notice the strange tone there was in those last words. She was now once more by the side of Miles and Mr. Corner; but whilst they talked, her mind was full of pictures of the pretty village church, the holy service, and its sweet hymns, of herself persuading Miles to go, and Cousin James with them too, and plenty of time after they left church to go and see the new house, before they went back to tea; and self-upbraidings were rising in her heart, when all at once she was roused by Miles's voice, saying, "Mary, what are you dreaming about? Here is Cousin James showing you the new chimneys, and you never listening to him. Look you, this is where I lived when I was a boy."

So then Mary put aside her uncomfortable reflections, and began to enjoy seeing the scattered village, every corner of which Miles knew so well, and the fine house that the Squire was building on the site of the old one that had been burnt down only two years ago; and although, long before her companions had had enough of

oking at the bare walls, calculating the dimensions and the cost, and making comparisons between this and the former houses, Mary was tired of stepping over awkward places, and of trying to keep her lilac silk clear of the heaps of lime and rubbish that were lying about ; yet she saw that Miles was satisfied, and he often had a loving word for her, which made her contented too.

It was still hot when they strolled back through the fields, and the tea, which was ready for them,—“quite ready,” as both Mrs. Corner and Cousin Grace, who met them in the pastures, assured them, was most refreshing. But they could not sit long over it, for it was nearly time to go back to the railway station. Not that they had to walk, though ; for there was the gig prepared for them to drive in. This was really kind, and Mary was warmed up to say so freely to Mrs. Corner, as she was putting on her things upstairs.

“Do not mention it, my dear,” said that good woman in reply. “You’re not fit for so much walking about, and the horse had nothing to do, and the boy has gone on to fetch him back. You mustn’t be frightened if he shies a bit ; it is only a way he has, and means nothing. I am sure I am glad I’ve seen you, and you must come again, and Corner says so too. Miles has done very well for himself, and so all’s well that turns out well, as I dare say Grace thinks now, poor girl ; and so try that vinegar, my dear, and if you want any more recipes, you know where to come to.”

Mrs. Corner’s good-will was not only shown in words : when Mary came downstairs, she found a basket packed with nice country things—butter, eggs, a good piece of bacon, and some preserves—ready to be put into the gig

with them. But what, perhaps, surprised her more than that, was when they were standing in the garden, whilst Miles was waiting for the gig-whip, the quiet Grace came up to her, and said, putting a little book into her hands, "Cousin Mary, you seem to like our hymns, will you accept this, and please don't mind that I've written some words at the beginning that came into my head this afternoon."

There was no time for more than hasty thanks, for the whip had been found, and the gig was waiting; so good-byes were exchanged, Mary was packed in with a large shawl to keep her from the dust, Miles, proud of his charge, was seated by her side, and the young couple started upon their pleasant evening drive.

The station was reached only too soon, and then came a tedious waiting for the unpunctual train. Less than half an hour conveyed them back to Moortown, and their country jaunt was over.

"We spent Sunday at my Cousin James's, at Redlands; a fine treat it was to us townfolks," said Miles, proudly, to his companion-clerks next morning.

"Yes, we had a pleasant day in the country," said Mary, carelessly, when one of their wives came to see her, and mentioned it; but that was not all she thought about it, for she had looked in Grace's hymn-book, and there, at the beginning, she found under her name and the date, words that had power to strike home even to her light, earth-loving heart.

"Him that confesseth Me before men, him shall the Son of Man also confess before the angels of God. But he that denieth Me before men, shall be denied before the angels of God."

"Little children, keep yourselves from idols."

Seventeen years had passed away since that Sunday at Redlands, the pretty young bride had become a middle-aged-looking mother, older far in appearance than in years. The bright golden colour was much faded out of her hair, and the light that used to laugh in her eyes was seldom seen, while wrinkles were creeping over her smooth fair skin. Seventeen years of apparent prosperity had left Mary thus. By the world outside them, Miles Corner and his wife might have been pointed out as a couple upon whom fortune had always smiled. Miles was still in the same situation, and was much trusted by his employer; his salary had several times been raised, so that his income was now what might well support his family in comfort, and that included no small numbers. His five children had grown up in health and intelligence above the average, and the shadow of no great trouble had darkened their own dwelling. It is true that Mary had had to weep over the loss of her widowed mother; but Mrs. Standish had lived to a good old age, and her decline had been gradual and prepared for. Serious illness had never been beneath their roof, and Mary had reason for her pride in her five strong, well-formed children. There was first her eldest, Philip, now about sixteen. He had been educated at a proprietary school in the town, and had profited by his advantages. More like his mother than Miles, it remained to be proved whether the amiable qualities which made him easily find friends were accompanied by the stronger virtues which would enable him to struggle successfully against the temptations of the world. His sister Annie was quite a Corner, capable enough, but reserved, and rather

given already to domineering over her mother, the only thing that ever roused Philip to anything like fiery anger. A nice little boy called Miles came next,—he was at the school that Philip had now left; and then, with some years between them and the older ones, came Bob and Fanny,—good, little, happy things, dreadfully afraid of their father, but knowing no other care or trouble. Afraid of their father! Yes; Miles was a man to be afraid of. Years had not softened him. Time alone betters no man, and to no more powerful influence had he ever yet yielded himself. For the first year he had been, as we have seen him, proud of Mary, and very fond of her; but showing his love, as a man like him could hardly refrain from doing, in small acts of tyranny, to which she yielded with all the gentle submission of her nature. After Philip's birth, however, a new element was introduced. The father had a rival now; and although no one could say he did not stand the first still in her affections, yet there were times when, if baby's comforts stood in the way of father's wishes, father must yield. Every time Miles was crossed, it seemed to make his temper worse, and the bitter things he would then say to Mary—although they did not take away her love, or make her even at the moment angry—made her timid, and then being timid made her try to hide things that were likely to annoy him; and if that was found out, then Miles was very stern, and, if he said nothing worse, set Mary down with scorn, as “a woman, who of course would lie.” Such was the state of inward discomfort that existed under a show of much prosperity.

Strange to say, in all this time they had never been again at Redlands. Mary's baby had prevented them

at first, and afterwards, when Philip was old enough to have gone with them, Miles had contrived to have some words with Cousin James, in the course of which the latter had said that Miles was more conceited than his father had been, if that were possible ; and as much less than that would set the younger man on fire, of course they quarrelled, and though Cousin James would fain have made friends again very soon, Miles stood aloof. Mrs. Corner would not join in the quarrel, and came to see Mary on the rare occasions of her visiting the market-town ; but her rheumatism increased upon her until at last she seldom left the boundaries of the farm. Grace once shyly called ; but Mary was distant in her manner, without meaning to be so ; and thus the intercourse that had seemed to promise so well for all, gradually ceased. Miles was not likely to regret the friendship of his plain country cousin, for he had not long ago become acquainted with a "real gentleman," one living on his own means, whose fine suits of clothing, his rings, and his heavy gold watch-chain, might have dazzled poor Mary, had she not preserved much of her simple country taste, and thought that Mr. Swinburne, if a gentleman, was a very unpleasant one. Miles, however, soon stopped her when she ventured to hint at her opinion, and he became more and more intimate with him, sometimes even bringing him home to have some dinner—luncheon Mr. Swinburne called it—with them, when the man gave sweet-things to the children, said flattering things to Annie, smelt of liquor, and, more than once, gave utterance to an oath.

On the evenings of these days, Miles never came in to tea, and Mary knew that she might begin her longest

piece of needle-work, for there would be hours of stitching for her before her husband returned—sometimes to scold her for not being in bed, sometimes to drink gin-and-water and complain that there was not a hot supper waiting for him. And what were her thoughts during those solitary hours, after the children had been put to bed—after Annie had yawned until she was obliged to comply with her mother's wishes and do the same—after even Philip had laid aside his books, and, hopeless of persuading his mother to let him take her place, had refreshed her heart by his affectionate words, and then retired too? As her needle swiftly coursed its way through the new calico, or more slowly darned Annie's last three-cornered rent, Mary was probably thinking how soon there would be a new frock to make, or settling which of her own would "turn about" into a little one, or running over Philip's future, with golden dreams for her handsome son; but, oftener still, she was wondering what had put Miles so much out that day, weighing every word or action through the house that might have displeased him, and all the time vaguely wishing that he would have nothing to do with Mr. Swinburne.

Such meditations, if perfectly unguided thoughts could be so called, were not in themselves unbecoming the pure, loving wife and mother that Mary Corner was; but how were these alone to tend to the improvement that should be going on in every Christian soul? Where was the anxiety to review her life in the sight of God? She never said, "Am I training my children in the paths of religion? Am I trying to lead Miles into the same? Am I treading in them myself?" Where, then, was the repentance which would have followed such scrutiny, where

the sight of God's mercy in Jesus Christ, which would have brought her all she needed? Mary dared not think on such things as these. She knew far too well how important they were, and that if she turned her heart to them, she must turn completely. So, although she went to church when Miles would let her, and encouraged Philip and Annie to go regularly, heard the children the catechism when Miles was out, and always gently told them when they were doing what was wrong, said her prayers too, and read Grace's hymns on Sunday—still the life of her soul was almost dead for want of nurturing, and she never encouraged the thoughts which might have raised the question—"Where shall I be when these things have passed from me? What would be my refuge in great tribulation?"

One day her husband came in smiling, and quite in spirits. Annie should have a new frock, he said,—what was she going about in that old thing for? Philip should be articulated like a gentleman; they should all go to the sea-side next summer. Mary was too much rejoiced to see his face so bright, to question him at first; but his good humour and his promises lasting all the day, at night she asked if Mr. Walker had raised his salary.

"No, indeed," replied Miles; "I expect nothing more from that old skinflint. I have found a better mine than he will ever help me to. Ah, my girl, I don't think you ever really liked Swinburne; but what if he makes our fortune, eh?"

"I'm sure it would be very kind of him," said Mary.

"Kind!" echoed Miles. "Why, he can't help it. True, he gives me the introduction, as one may say, but it is a man's own powers of calculation that must do the rest."

I always said that I was made for better things than mere copying and engrossing."

Mary asked no more. She let well alone. It was pleasant to have money to spend; and she might have known nothing more about the matter had it not happened that one day she received a visit from Grace Carpenter.

It was so long since she had set eyes on her, that she was much surprised, and felt almost inclined to ask her why she came. Grace, however, did not invite familiarity, she was quiet as usual, and only a close observer might have been struck by the signs of deep feeling working in her countenance. They talked about Redlands on the one side, of the garden, cousin James, and the aunt's rheumatism on the other hand; the little children had to be exhibited, and the elder ones talked about, so there was no lack of subjects; but when Mary said that she hoped Grace would stay and take her tea, the latter rose, and, colouring very much, declined. With strange inconsistency, however, she sat down again, and said in a very shy way,—

"Do you know a Mr. Swinburne?"

"Yes," said Mary, looking up with surprise; "he often comes here."

"Comes here!" repeated Grace. "You don't mean that Miles brings him here."

"Yes, why not?" answered Mary, with a little spirit, such as she could show when any one aspersed her husband.

"He is not a fit man to enter any decent house," continued Grace, colouring still more. "I have been told that by friends I can rely upon, and he keeps race-

horses, and bets, and there are not wanting those who say he cheats."

"You don't say so," exclaimed Mary, divided between pleasure at her own prejudice being justified, and annoyance at Grace's interfering, besides having some qualms of fear on Miles's account.

"It is true," said Grace, "or I would not have spoken of it, and why I have done so, cousin Mary, is that you may keep Miles away from him. You are living in peace and plenty now," and as she said this, Grace looked round the room, which bore marks of prosperity, if not of good taste, in the large framed engravings, and the various ornaments which had been amongst Miles's recent presents to his wife; "and it would be very sad if this man was to disturb Miles in any way; and one thing leads to another, in these betting transactions they tell me, particularly."

"I'm sure I ought to be very much obliged to you," said Mary, suddenly seized with a great jealousy of Grace's interest in the matter; "but Miles is not one to be led away by any man, and cheating was never in his line."

"I know that," said Grace quietly, "and you must do as you please, Mary; only I thought very likely you did not know what a wicked man this Swinburne was. It may be, as you say, that Miles stands by himself too much to be persuaded."

"Thank you," said Mary, coolly. "We hear you are to have a great stir near you, when the young gentleman comes of age;" and so they talked about other things, and Mary again asked Grace to stay to tea, and that being declined, bid her good afternoon, and saw her

out quite calmly. But her heart had been turning sick with fear, and as soon as Grace was fairly gone, she sat down and cried heartily. The striking of the clock aroused her ; it was time for the girl to bring in the tea-things, and Annie would be coming from school ; so she wiped her eyes, stirred the fire, and took up little Bobby, and feeling his fat chubby arms around her neck, almost forgot her fears, and concluded that Grace was so particular, perhaps she was making too much of it.

Her husband did not come in to tea, an omission that was now of frequent occurrence, but he appeared before bedtime, in a humour that was not to be depended on. As he was grumbling about something or other, he happened to ask if any one had been at the house to-day, and so Mary mentioned, what otherwise she very likely might have concealed, that Cousin Grace had called.

"What brought her here?" was the next question, of course ; and Mary, after pausing for a moment, in a sort of desperation blurted out the words, "She came to tell me that Mr. Swinburne is a bad man ; that he bets and cheats, and worse."

"The deuce she did !" said Miles, between his teeth ; "and what business is it of hers, I'd like to know—a blundering saint as she is?"

Oh, but, Miles dear, it is not true, is it?" asked Mary, piteously. "Don't have anything more to do with him, then, will you?"

The answer to this was couched in language Miles had learnt amongst his late companions ; and whilst her ears were wounded by the epithets he used, and her heart was sore at his unkindness, her mouth was closed, and it was

pretty certain Miles might go which way he liked in future, and Mary would not interfere.

But suspicion having been once awakened in her mind, she was constantly seeing something that confirmed it. Her husband's variable spirits and temper, the alternate freedom with his money and niggardly complaining of the spending of a penny, marked to her mind his successes or the contrary; and perhaps more than the discomfort it caused, and her fears for the future, was the pain she felt in discovering that her Miles could do so wrong. She still, however, blamed Mr. Swinburne more than Miles, and when he came, which was now but seldom, she could scarcely bear to speak to him. Her anxiety was plain in her looks, and her cheeks began to grow hollow. She kept up appearances when Miles was in, but as soon as he went out she often gave way, even in the presence of her children. Annie was not one to show that she noticed it, but Philip begged his mother to say what grieved her, and when the keenness of his affection found out what she would not tell him, he tried to make up to her by his own dutiful attentions. Unfortunately, his deep sympathy for his mother made his heart burn when he saw her often most unkindly treated, and Miles perceiving this, began to take an apparent dislike to the son he had been so proud of. He no longer talked about making a gentleman of Philip; and when an opportunity offered of placing him with a merchant in the town as an errand-boy and junior clerk, he accepted it at once, took him away from school, and fixed him in a situation which was respectable enough, but which was very unlikely to afford him an opportunity of rising in the world. Philip was very dismal about it at first, for he had got on well at school,

and his father's promises in his brightest moods had made the boy dream of a different destiny ; regular work, however, soon helped him to grow more contented ; his intelligence and fair handwriting soon made him valued, and he became a favourite with his masters. At first, of course, he had no salary ; but at the end of twelve months' trial a small sum was promised him, and by that time matters at home had worsened so, that he was thankful to think that here was a beginning of the means of helping his mother. For Mary, who had at first never been troubled with money cares beyond the necessity of explaining to Miles all her purchases, was now often straitened. Miles, always stern, and never more so than when she looked particularly ill and worn, was always preaching about her being careful, and she tried hard to save, even to pinching her new baby of the pretty caps and things she had been so proud to deck the others in ; but the time came when it was more than pretty things that must be stopped, when Miles would no longer furnish money for their daily needs, but insisted on their taking credit at the shops, and then Mary felt that they were poor indeed. But there was more behind, to which even her fears had not reached.

Her husband's master had begun to be dissatisfied. Miles was seldom seen with respectable companions, his always rare attendances at church had ceased altogether, his duties were ill-performed, and it was clear that Mr. Walker only waited for an occasion to complain. This was soon forthcoming. Miles, one day, went off to attend some well-known races, and during his absence a matter of importance in the office had been neglected. Mr. Walker, still reluctant to discharge one who had been

faithful for so many years, began by speaking in a tone of friendly but very serious expostulation. Miles, however, flushed with money and success, and intending to make his fortune in a stroke or two, did not think it worth while to listen, and, before he could recover himself, found that he had, in a few surly, ungracious words, given up his situation.

That night, when he went home, he could not look Mary in the face, her patient tones and languid movements reproached him so ; he did, indeed, throw money before her, which was truly welcome, but the time was gone by for any confidence between them. She smiled, but felt as if the money blistered her ; whilst he, silent about everything that had passed, tried to persuade himself that, for certain, long before the expiration of his notice, his fortune would be made, and Mary recompensed for anything she might have had to bear.

Before that time his fortune was totally lost, instead of made ; Swinburne had cheated him, and then laughed at him ; and he himself, having refused to take any care of a severe cold, was laid up in rheumatic fever.

Mary had not been strong for the last few months, and yet she had to do the work of a strong woman, for they no longer kept a servant. It is true that the eldest girl, Annie, was big enough to share the labour of the house ; but Annie had been always kept at school, and having readily imbibed Mr. Swinburne's flatteries, and her father's hints that she would never have occasion to work with her hands at least, she had not learned to be useful ; and now, when she really did want sometimes to help, her queer temper stood in the way of her being taught, and rather than ask her to do a thing, or run the

risk of putting her out of temper, her poor mother would half slave herself to death. Washing, baking, cooking, all that fell to Mary's share, beside the nursing of her husband. Many nights did she sit up beside him, lifting him and turning him with a skill that stood in place of strength, and then come down, wan and pale, to get the children their breakfasts, and perhaps find her brave Philip on his knees before the fire, holding a piece of bread to toast with one hand, and trying to amuse the baby with the other. In all the intervals of the morning's work, she had to run up to help and soothe or cheer her husband, then back again, until, by the time Philip returned at night, she was ready to sink down upon the floor, had not necessity obliged her still to maintain a courageous front.

"Mother," Philip would say, "you must not do so much. Let Annie finish that ironing. You shall not touch it. I will be 'father' now," and with playful mastery he would place her in the large chair, give her her work-basket, for he knew that she must have some employment, and then half coax, half pique Annie into being proud of accomplishing the ironing, whilst he went upstairs to take the place of both beside his father; and this was no enviable post, for chronic pains had taken the place of his first alarming illness, and Miles, with no previous stock of patience to draw upon for these weary days, was a most trying invalid. But it was never for long; Mary would soon appear with a basin of broth she had been warming up, or if she did not, the pettish "Where's your mother?" would soon oblige her to be brought up.

Day after day wore away, until a time came which

was more trying still, when the money that Miles had brought in on that one successful day, had dwindled down to nothing, when the small remnant of salary had all been spent, when to-morrow's wants had to be provided for, and there was no chance of any more coming in.

Such was the prospect, as Philip and his mother sat down one night to consider what could be done. It was a cheerless consultation; only those who, after being accustomed to live in decent comfort, have come down to their last penny, and the bread-winner laid upon a bed of sickness, know the sadness of such a moment. But youth is buoyant.

"I will go to Mr. Snelgrove, mother," said Philip, at last; "I will tell him of my father's illness. Perhaps he will advance me my half-year, and though it is not much, we shall be glad of a little now. I wish I could work over hours, or find something to do at nights. From nine to six is nothing, when we are in such a state."

"You find work at nights, my boy," said his mother, fondly. "Who has chopped the old wood up, and mended the door-handle, and brought in the water, and washed out the scullery, and waited on father, and cheered up Annie, and made baby quiet to-night, I'd like to know?"

"Nonsense, mother," said Philip, with a shamefaced smile stealing over his face; "I could do most of that at by-times, and we would make Annie do the rest, if only I had some means of earning money."

"Never mind, my dear," said his mother, though how much she minded herself was shown by the tears that

were welling up into her eyes. "I have been thinking a great deal these many nights I have sat up beside your father, of things I learnt when I was a girl at home, and I want to think more of them ; only sometimes I am cut to the heart, it seems such a shame only to turn to Almighty God when we are in such trouble ; but if we ever get right again, oh, Philip, my boy, we will never on any account neglect our prayers and church ; for there is no real peace or comfort in anything, not in plenty of money, nor even in everybody being kind, if we forsake God, and give up what we know to be right."

"I am sure, mother, dear," said Philip, "you need not say anything, you that have always spent yourself for us all. If that is not right, I don't know what is."

"Ah, my dear, you cannot know how it has been with me, nor can I tell you ; only believe your mother, Philip, and whatever you do, make religion the first thing. Give your heart to it. It is that God asks us for, in return for all He has done for us, and if we withhold it from Him, we shall bitterly repent it, as I do now."

Poor Mary's talking quite broke her down for a little while, but Philip soothed her with a girl's tenderness, and at last she was able to resume the practical subject that they had begun with.

"I know, mother," said Philip, "what we shall have to do for to-morrow. I can't say I like it, of course, but in the newspapers one sees how many are driven to it daily. I know a shop where we can get money upon any of those gimcracks, and I am sure you could spare them."

"To be sure I could," said Mary, brightening. "Far better than letting them be broken, as the blue jar was

by Polly only this afternoon. Little thing, she climbed up and put both her arms round it, and next minute both she and the jar were on the ground. They are only a temptation to her. Only father wouldn't like it, I fear, Philip ; but it is a necessity."

"Indeed it is," said Philip. "I'll go directly. It is the sort of errand for this time of night, I fancy. So you cheer up, mother, you shall have something to boil the pot with before long."

An impatient call from upstairs made Mary start up to go to her husband ; but first she hurriedly pointed out some pictures and ornaments that might go, and then, with a smile of hope and affection for her son, she hastened up to Miles.

In less than half an hour she went down again to open the door for Philip. He had brought more money than she had ventured to expect, but it was plain that he had not liked his errand.

"I got amongst a queer lot, mother," he said ; "however, it couldn't be helped. One man, I should say, was a regular thief. Jones, the pawnbroker, who is, I believe, a decent man himself, wouldn't have anything to say to the watch and seals he brought ; so the fellow slouched his hat over his shaggy eyebrows, and swore an oath, and went away. One poor woman, who brought a shawl, I suppose from her own back, for she had not one on, looked awfully cold and hungry. I was half inclined to give her something,—I wish now I had, only we want so much ourselves at present ; I know I'll give plenty away as soon as we are well off again. But what do you think, mother ? As I came out, I nearly stumbled against Mr. Richard Snelgrove and his wife ; they were coming

from a lecture at the Institute, I expect, for I saw carriages at the door. I turned terribly red, I am sure, and there is a horrid lamp just above the doorway ; the shop is at the end of a narrow passage, you know, mother ; but perhaps they did not see me."

"I hope not," said Mary. "Oh, but it does hurt me that you should have had such a thing to do."

"It's only fancy, mother," said poor Philip, "makes it so disagreeable. We shall, perhaps, laugh about it some day."

He did not tell his mother for how long he had paced backwards and forwards before the end of that narrow passage, until he could summon resolution to go in ; nor how, when his eyes met those of his younger and less favourably disposed master, he had felt ready to sink into the ground with mortification. Alas ! he learned to go quicker upon the same unpleasant errand soon. One by one all superfluous articles were carried thither, with smaller and smaller hopes of their being redeemed, as the father still remained so suffering an invalid, that the idea of his earning anything speedily again, even supposing that he could have returned to his employment, was not to be entertained.

It may be concluded that all this time Miles was by no means regardless of the difficulties his family were in, though ignorant of their extent. His first inquiry, when the immediate violence of the fever had passed away, was after Mr. Swinburne, whether he had called or not ; and as soon as he regained the use of his hands, he insisted upon writing a letter to him, and no answer coming, another, in case the first might have miscarried ; whilst in the interval, he fretted so much as to retard his pro-

gress greatly. This made Mary consent the more readily to what would otherwise have fretted her,—his desire that Philip should next call at Mr. Swinburne's lodgings and make inquiries after him.

She need not have feared ; Mr. Swinburne had disappeared some weeks ago, had left no address, and was not likely to come back again, the landlady said, to a place where he had debts enough to sink even a man who was born to swing.

The increased groans and impatience that followed this intelligence might be caused by pain of either body or mind. Miles never referred to the subject again, and Mary could not regret the characteristic reserve that drew a veil over all the past. The only time in which he might be said to allude to it was once when, in a better mood, he began to wonder whether all the money was done, and how they managed, and then said to her, "Mary, I should think you'll wish yourself back at Wallington—don't you?—and that Miles Corner had never crossed your path ; but I meant to make you a lady, my girl, you'll remember that when I'm done for."

The most tender caresses were Mary's only reply to this ; her heart was full, and she longed to tell him that she regretted nothing so much as her own weakness ; but the part of a nurse is to soothe, not to excite, and she forbore to enter upon her own feelings. Besides, although at this moment so much subdued, how could she hope that Miles would understand, did she indeed express to him that deep repentance which had brought her back to her Redeemer, lowly and sad, but had left her with a feeling of security such as in her brightest days she had never experienced.

Weeks now passed away in the same manner, in continual struggle and privation downstairs, in impatient suffering, but quietness above, when one day, Annie, who had been taking the children out for a walk, came in with a bright excited air, quite unusual to her, "Mother," she said, "I have got a situation."

"A situation, my dear," repeated her mother, who had indeed been thinking much about Annie's being put to something, but not knowing what was most likely for her, "What sort of one?"

"Well, one at Mrs. Knyvett's, the shoe shop in High-street," said Annie. "You know Sarah Anne was at school with me, and she is going to be married, so they want some one to take her place with the younger children, and to teach them; they are a large family. I said I would like best to live at home, and they will give £15 a year. That will come in nicely for you—won't it, mother."

"Thank you, my dear," said Mary, much touched by this rare show of consideration on Annie's part; "I wish you could have the money for yourself; but you will have the pleasure of knowing that you are helping us. Philip will be quite surprised. We must get him to settle it all for you, as father is not well enough to be troubled about it."

Philip was surprised enough, but he was not quite satisfied. The Knyvetts were people of show, but not much thought of, he said. One of them, a brother of the master of the shoe shop, was in their office, and he had never liked him; he was nothing but a sneak.

"My dear Philip," said Mary, "you should not speak so of your companions."

"He is no companion of mine," returned Philip, rather scornfully ; "I wouldn't dip my pen in the same ink-stand, I'd be very sorry. He came to me and tried to get out of me where that Swinburne had gone to. I answered him very shortly ; but I should have liked to have told him that he was rather more likely to know than I."

"Philip is growing quite sharp nowadays," said Annie, with a laugh ; "he is plucking up a spirit."

"You have too much on your mind, my boy," said Mary, "it is no wonder if you get a little soured."

Philip blushed, and stooped to take up little Polly, who was clinging to his knees, and then resumed the subject of Annie's situation. That she should help to earn was certainly a good thing, but could his mother spare her ;—three children, and the father on her hands and all the work. At any rate, if Annie did take the place, for the present she must be boarded in the house, even with far less money to receive as wages, and she must come home at seven o'clock every night, and then his mother should do nothing after that. Mary smiled ; but she felt that she might leave it in her man-boy's hands, and so Philip, much against the grain, went and made a bargain for his sister with the finely dressed but vulgar Mrs. Knyvett, and one of the items was that she might receive her wages by the week. He might well be anxious about that, for one by one every article that could possibly be spared was being sold, and yet they could scarcely manage to procure the scanty necessities they allowed themselves, and the pinched air of poverty was visible in all their faces. The doctor did not come often now ; he said that Miles wanted little medicine, only care ; but there was his bill to dread, and as for the house rent,

Mary dared not look forward to the day, but tried to turn the thought into a prayer for patience to work through, and bear whatever might be before them.

So Annie went to her place to be nursery governess, as Sarah Anne had called it, and at first was highly pleased with the feeling of independence; but she soon found that there was far more drudgery than dignity about the highly sounding situation. Six children under eight years old had to be taken care of, their rude manners borne, and their mending done; the mother, a hard cross woman, was supposed to be always in the shop, but continually darted out of it, to catch "Miss," as she called Annie, at some idling tricks, so different from the gentle guidance of her mother; and all intervals had to be filled up with binding shoes. Annie cried to herself many a time at nights, but she would not give up, and, tired as she was when she came home, she tried more than she had ever done before to take her share of anything there was to be done. And all this time the winter was passing away, the days were lengthening, it was not so very bitter to be without a fire. In the little neglected garden, the snowdrops were peeping out of the dark earth, and Miles was so far better that he could be moved out of bed into a chair near the window, where he sat for hours, though still unable to employ himself at all. And here beside the scanty fire they contrived to scrape up for him, Mary sewed, for she had taken in some plain work to do, and every spare moment, night and day, was spent in it; and here the baby played in the quiet way in which it had been trained during all those weary days when "father could not bear a noise." Happily, as it seemed, Miles had taken to the child, noticed it far more

than any of the others, and being encouraged by the fondness the pretty little creature showed him in return, it became his sole amusement and diversion to watch and talk to her, to Mary's great delight as well as to her relief; for now Polly was nearly off her hands, father was so good a nurse; and grinding cares, the want of food, loss of strength itself could be forgotten, when she came up from the desolation below into the neatly kept chamber, with the bright sun shining upon Miles making paper boats for his bonnie little girl.

One evening in March, Annie did not come home at her usual time, so Philip, always on the watch, went out to meet her. He himself was long in coming back. He had waited for her, he said, but the people of the house told him she could not come. It was nine o'clock when she appeared, looking very much worn out; the youngest child had been ill all day; it seemed she had never had a moment's peace with him. It was a busy day with the shop, and she did not like to leave him till his mother came to take her place.

"You were right, honey," said Mary, and made her go to bed. She needed a supply of rest, for the next day was worse, and she only ran down in the evening for some things, and to say that Mrs. Knyvett was in a dreadful way; it had turned out scarlet fever, and she had cried and begged Annie to stay, for the boy would be quiet with no one else.

"It is a great risk for yourself, my dear," said Mary.

"Oh, mother, I must stay," said Annie. "I'm not afraid, and I have run risk already. You know I couldn't be coming backwards and forwards for the others, and the girl they had, has gone away to-day."

Mary felt that in this case she must ask Miles ; so to him she went. He looked at Polly, and decided at once. Annie had better keep away, and it was settled so. With many injunctions from her mother about being prudent and clean, Annie returned to the sick house, and Mary resumed her needlework, and whilst she prayed for them, strove to keep down the fears that were tormenting her, both on Annie's account, and little Fanny's, with whom her sister had slept the preceding night.

Many a time during the next day did she jump up in the middle of a scam, and go to the window, and whilst she made some cheering remark as usual to Miles on what she saw, re-assure herself by a glance at the little ones who were playing in the garden below. Her fears were soon justified ; Fanny first began with the fever, and then Bobby, and the bread-winning needle-work had to be laid aside entirely, whilst she nursed the poor little things, who by scanty food had been rendered a fitting prey for the violence of the disease. It is sad enough to have infectious fever in a house where every luxury is forthcoming, and there is no other care to interfere with that of the sick-room, but how much worse when there is not a sixpence to spare for comforts, and the doctor's visit is almost dreaded, because it is an expense. Happily in this case (how often it is so) Mr. Agar was a kind, feeling man ; he had not been unobservant of the state of things during this dreary winter, and he now said to Mary,—“ Do not trouble yourself about my visits, Mrs. Corner. I am coming to see these children as a friend. When better times arrive, then you shall repay me ; ” and all that care and skill could do to ease the choking throats and aching limbs was done for them

by him and his assistant. They had the fever badly, but at last it turned, and Mary breathed more freely, as she saw the slight improvement. No sooner, however, had they been called out of danger, than the baby Polly began, and then Mary's heart did, indeed, begin to fail her ; for besides the miserable sight of her little treasure's sufferings, she had an additional load in her husband's despair. From the first, when Polly was taken ill, he would receive no comfort. Philip, who was kept entirely away from the sick-rooms, devoted himself to his father every moment he was at home ; but it was a hard task to soothe one whom both illness and long-indulged habit had rendered so highly irritable. Besides it could not be avoided that he was left much alone, for Mary's time was completely divided between the poor baby in Philip's room, which had been vacated for her, and the children in the next, who were often clamorous for drink, or perhaps just for the sight of "mother." Not that it was for long, though it seemed so, night and day work as it was, for the baby had only been three days ill, when one afternoon she grew so quickly worse that Mary longed for Philip's return, that she might obtain some assistance. Every cough seemed like choking, and its fever was increasing so much, that she listened with straining ears for his coming. At length she heard the turning of the handle. "Now my Polly shall be better," she murmured, as, drawing her arm away from under the aching head, she ran down to meet her boy, expecting, as usual, to be greeted by the smile that never failed her. But he was standing quite still beside the front window, and when he turned round at the sound of her voice, he was unlike himself, pale, and in a dream, as it were.

She had no time or thought for this, however,—“Oh, honey,” she said, “how glad I am to see you. Polly is so bad, I am very frightened. You must fetch Mr. Agar directly, and, my dear, father says Annie must come home. You see, with all the three children ill, there is no one to look after him, we can scarcely do without her.”

“I think not indeed, mother,” said Philip, in a quiet voice ; “I will fetch them both directly,” and as he turned, he added, “Annie’s nearest, I’ll go there first,” and then went out, and Mary hastened upstairs again.

She was shocked to perceive that the baby had grown much worse during her few minutes’ absence ; a change had come over the little face, and she called Miles in an agony, for the icy touch of death seemed to have fallen upon her own heart.

Her voice of acute distress roused Miles out of his apathy and his weakness. He did what would have seemed to him impossible an hour before, raised himself from his chair, and crept, by the aid of table and wall, out of his own room, and along the narrow passage that led to the other one ; and whilst Mary was bending over the last struggles of their darling, her husband’s arm was round her, and his breast was heaving with the same sorrow as her own.

When all was quiet, then Mary remembered him, though as yet too much stunned to take in all the strangeness of his being there, and, still tearless, she turned towards where he had thrown himself sobbing on the bed, and said, “Miles, dear, come away. She is safe now in the Lord’s keeping ; no more pain, no more sorrow. Let her go,” and although he did not answer her, yet he

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Mr. Snelgrove visits Mrs. Corner.—P. 121.



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allowed her to half support, half drag, him back to his own room. She had first placed him in his chair, when a loud double knock—strong, jarring sound—was heard at the front door.

Mechanically she went at once to open it, saying to herself, "Mr. Agar needn't come, we don't want him now;" but when she opened the door, it was not Mr. Agar, it was a stranger who stood there.

"This is Mr. Corner's, is it not?" said the gentleman, stepping in and through the little passage into the room, without waiting for an invitation.

"Yes, sir," said Mary, shutting the door, and following him; "but he is ill and can see no one."

"You do not seem well yourself," said the gentleman, kindly, as a gleam of evening sun came through the window and fell upon a face that was startling in its painful composure. "Perhaps you know something of my errand?"

"I don't know you, sir," said Mary; "but I ought to tell you that we have scarlet fever in this house."

"I am not afraid," said the gentleman. "Indeed I knew it, for your son told me last week. I am Mr. Snelgrove."

Mary curtseyed. "I am sorry, sir," she said, "that Miles cannot see you. You have been very kind to Philip."

"I wish that I could be sure that he has deserved anything we may have done for him," replied Mr. Snelgrove; "but my business here now is to tell you that we have lost a large sum of money only this afternoon, and that it is said Philip Corner has had something to do with it. By a strange chance he was seen to raise his hand towards the money, when he thought he was unob-

served, and although, on the witness making a slight noise, he passed on through the room, we can hardly doubt that he afterwards made the attempt again, and with more success."

"Philip, my son, sir, do you mean," said Mary, making, as it were, an effort to understand; then drawing herself up, whilst a flush spread over her pale features, she added, "My Philip! It is a lie, whoever says it;" and with these words a deadly faintness came over her, and she would have fallen, had not Philip entered at that moment, and, seeing her, though with her back towards him, drooping over the table, hastily put his arms round her, and held her up, whilst he spoke the tenderest words to her, unconscious that any one else was near.

"What is it, mother? Is she worse, poor little thing?" Mr. Agar will be here almost directly. Now, then, you'll be better soon. Annie can't be spared now, but she's coming soon, and then you shall rest. We won't all leave you again."

Her son's loving words opened the flood of tears that had been choking her, and they burst forth as he placed her in a chair, and got her a little water.

"There now," he said, "you will sit here quiet a bit, and I will go to the children. Sir," he continued, looking at Mr. Snelgrove, whom he had observed when he crossed the room for the water, "I hope you will excuse us, we are in sad trouble. I was going to ask you, might I stay at home for a few days, I can, indeed, hardly be spared?"

Before Mr. Snelgrove could reply, the door opened again, and Mr. Agar walked in, followed by a tall young woman in neat attire. In a moment's quiet scrutiny, Mr. Agar took in the group before him, and bowing to

Mr. Snelgrove, he went up to Mary, and said, "I have brought you some assistance, Mrs. Corner. Your cousin, I think; I met her on the way. The little one is worse, I fear."

"She is better, sir," said Mary, with a strange, sad smile. "How-dye-do, Grace?" she added, getting up and shaking hands with her. "You don't know, perhaps, the sort of folk you've come to. The children are all down in fever, and Miles has only moved himself once in, I don't know how long," passing her hand over her forehead, "and that was to see little Polly die, just now."

Grace as well as the others looked inexpressibly shocked, but after exchanging one glance with the doctor, she used the quiet tact that she possessed, and contrived to lead the poor mother away, Mr. Agar following them.

Then Mr. Snelgrove, who had been observing all with the greatest interest and sympathy addressed Philip, who was looking wistfully after his mother, and only restrained by his master's presence from the full expression of his grief, and said,—

"Philip, it may seem cruel to persist in my errand at a time like this, but it may be that it is a good time for it. I cannot think that, under these circumstances, you would tell me an untruth, whilst I could not in such a scene judge you harshly. I came to speak to your father, but I appeal to you instead. My brother incautiously left a large sum of money on the counting-house table this afternoon; great part of it is missing. Did you take it?"

The blood had mounted to Philip's forehead, but it now left him deadly pale, as he raised his eyes to Mr. Snelgrove, and replied, "No, sir, I did not; I am not a thief." There he paused, then, with a great effort, added, "But I

am near to it. You see our house, sir ; the rooms are emptied of all but the barest necessities, we have had to sell or pawn all that we could spare. My father is helpless, Annie is trying to earn ; but the people do not pay her as they promised. The money you kindly gave me is all spent, the children have all had the fever ; my mother has sat up all night and day, sewing, slaving, nursing—you don't know what she is, sir. This morning, Polly, the one she says is dead, asked for a drink of milk, and mother had none to give her ; and she cried to think she had not. And this afternoon I saw the money ; I longed to take some ; I even put out my hand—I don't think I could have kept it, sir, if I had taken it ; but I might have done—however, words mother has told me came into my mind, and I fled away from the temptation ; but I don't think I shall ever respect myself again."

At first, Philip had spoken quickly ; but the last words were grave and sad, and when he had finished, he stood still and humble before his master.

"The money is gone," said Mr. Snelgrove—Philip started and flushed again—"but I see, my boy, you have not taken it. You have, however, been suspected, and I must now return to prevent the steps which are being taken to fix the suspicion upon you. You may stay at home and console your poor parents, but come to my room at ten o'clock to-morrow morning, and we will try to sift the matter to the bottom. Meanwhile give that sovereign to your mother to ease her present need. Be grateful to her, Corner ; but do not forget also to give thanks to Him, who with the temptation also made a way for you to escape."

And so saying Mr. Snelgrove quietly left the house,

and Philip remained in a maze of different feelings, almost unconsciously clasping the precious sovereign in his hand.

Meanwhile Grace had gone upstairs with his mother. She had asked to see the poor infant, and Mary was leading the way into the silent room, when a sound of crying, and a call of "Mother," from the other one, arrested her for a moment; but the next, she answered, "I am coming, honey," and proceeded to the little bed, where she uncovered the beautiful sleeping face, and looked up calmly, but piteously, at Mr. Agar, who alone had followed her in. He asked her a few questions, to which she replied quietly and simply, and then they proceeded to the living children, who were already, however, in Grace's hands being soothed and comforted.

"These children will do very well now," said Mr. Agar, "you need not be at all uneasy about them. I am going to sit with their father for a while, and I advise you to take some rest."

"Rest!" repeated Mary, after he had left them; "rest is not for this world."

"I do not wonder at your feeling sadly that it is so," said Grace, kindly, putting a chair forward for her, making her sit down on it, and drawing her own shawl over the thin shoulders. "What a dreadful time you must have had. They tell me Miles cannot walk. Is it true? They are in such a state at home that you never let them know. What has it been?"

"Rheumatic fever first, and weakness afterwards," said Mary. "Mr. Agar thinks he will get about again when spring fairly comes. But he has no heart for anything since he lost his situation."

"Lost his situation, my dear," said Grace. "Is it so bad as that? How have you managed then? Aunt thought, being so long with Mr. Walker, he would be sure to have had his salary all the time."

"Oh, we have got on pretty well so far," said poor Mary. "Philip"—the name almost made her break down again—"earns a little now, and Annie has gone out, and we have been able to raise a little money. It is only this fever that has thrown us back, so many things are wanted in illness. Oh, Polly, Polly!" And the image of her child needing the comforts she could not get for her, was too much, the grief overpowered her again, and she wept bitter tears.

Grace's sympathy made her tears flow, too, although she only knew one tithe of Mary's troubles, and Mary was the first to recover herself.

"You must not mind my going on this way, Grace," she said; "I have not been strong of late, or I should not bear it so badly. Do not think that I am murmuring. I am trying to give my baby up to God. His will must be right, and as for the rest, oh, pray for me, that I may be able to bear it. There is not one thing that has come I would wish different, for I have called unto the Lord in trouble and He has heard me. Grace," she added, in a low tone, "my idols are broken, that I may serve the living God."

Grace looked at her, and saw that on that pale haggard face there was a serenity that did not belong to this world.

"Praised be His holy name," said she, "that He has brought you out of darkness into His marvellous light, that even in this time of deep tribulation you are able to look to Him and be at peace."

"At peace ! Ah, Grace," said Mary, leaning forward, "do not speak of me so. I am sore troubled. It is only that you were once a true friend to me, and I wanted to tell you that I know that you were right. But," and she got up hastily, "here I am talking about myself, and never making you welcome, and you have had nothing since you came in ;" and there Mary stopped short, for surely there was little or nothing to offer her, but Grace hastened to interrupt her.

"Do not think of me for a moment, Mary. I am come to stay with you as long as you like to have me, and that I may be no trouble. Aunt has put up a great hamper of things, and the man is bringing a can of milk as well, for the children, and I must tell you now, that I have a little money of my own that, living with my aunt as I do, and never likely to change, I do not know what to do with, and it is yours if you want it. So now, dear cousin, if you will trust me, I will do all that is needful in these two rooms, and do you go down, or to Miles, whichever you like, and only take care of yourself."

It was with a very thankful heart for the help that had been sent to her in her hour of need, that Mary left her cousin, and went downstairs with the view of finding her poor son. He was standing where Mr. Snelgrove had left him, when she went softly to him and put her arms round his neck.

"Do not pity me, mother, dear," he said returning her caress. "I do not deserve it, nor Mr. Snelgrove's kindness either. Look, he does not suspect me at all now, and he has left this for you. I must tell you, mother, how it has been. You will not despise me, though I

deserve nothing better." And then the poor lad poured out all, far more fully than he had done to Mr. Snelgrove; and whilst his mother shuddered at the thought of the peril he had passed through, she was able to rejoice in the tender conscience that so deeply repented of even the wish to do evil, and could trust that out of the fire he had come forth strengthened.

They were interrupted by the arrival of the hamper and Grace's box, and Grace coming down to see to the unpacking herself, that she might get some arrowroot for the children. Philip asked if he had not better take that opportunity of running up to Annie to tell her of poor baby's death.

"She will be sadly grieved," said Philip. "She was bad enough at the thought of her being so ill, and she would fain have come directly; but the mistress is ill now, and Mr. Knyvett came downstairs almost crying, and said he didn't know what they should do without Annie, she was the best girl he had ever seen. That was nice to hear, mother—was it not?"

"Yes, honey, indeed it was," said Mary, thankfully; "I only hope she will not do too much. Tell her, if she can't leave them to-night, she must come down early in the morning. And now I will go to your father."

Sadly Miles wanted her—not with his old, impatient, selfish need; but because in her alone he knew he should find sympathy with the grief that was all the more violent because he was generally so self-contained a man. He held out his hand to her as she came in, and Mary felt that it was the husband of her early days who was beside her; and if the spirit of their little child was hovering near, it might perchance be smiling over the

blessing that its release from earth had brought to them.

At ten o'clock next morning, Philip, with what courage he could muster, took himself to Mr. Snelgrove's house of business, not as usual to the clerks' office, but to that inner sanctuary which was never entered by the juniors but with a sort of awe. Here he found both his masters, a lawyer, and a policeman; and although he told all he knew about the matter, with a modest simplicity that prepossessed three of the party strongly in his favour, he left the place again with a heavy consciousness that his younger master had by no means accepted the assurance that he was innocent. The leave which Mr. Snelgrove had given him to remain at home was a relief in some respects, but he could not help dreading the going back afterwards, as if his very absence now might have fixed suspicion on him. It was little he could do, therefore, to cheer the house of mourning; but that part was for Cousin Grace, and well she did it, in her grave, quiet way.

A bright fire in the grate that had so long been cold downstairs, a board spread with such good food as had not been seen for months, and an air of clean neatness through the poorly-furnished rooms—this was only half her work; there was the kind word, too, the thought for every one but herself; and the way she had of making them all feel, as her aunt and uncle did, that things must go right when Grace was there—all this made them seem so comfortable. But it was for Annie that was reserved the pleasure of taking Philip's special trouble away. She had already been in for a few minutes in the morning; but at night she appeared again, and unconscious—for

none knew but Philip and his mother—how nearly it concerned him, she said: "Troubles come thick upon everybody, I think, mother. There is Mr. Knyvett's brother run away; and he has taken lots of money with him, they say; and the police are after him."

"Do you mean Edward?" asked Philip, eagerly.

"Yes," answered Annie, lightly. "You gave him a bad name, Philip; he is showing he deserved it."

Anxiously Philip questioned her; but she knew no more, and he was obliged to curb his impatience until morning, when he was not surprised to receive a message that Mr. Snelgrove wanted him. But it was little Polly's funeral, and not until he had followed her body to the grave could he obey the summons. No wonder he looked very grave and sad when, as he was entering the office, he met his younger master coming out.

"Ha, Corner, is that you?" said Mr. John. "My brother has gone home already; but I suppose you will be glad to know the thief is found. That cringing fellow Knyvett, all the time. It was he tried to fix it upon you; and I must confess, you know, I saw you lurking once in those back-slums; but my brother has explained that to me. Well, there is no harm done. Shake hands, my lad. We must help you on a bit."

Philip shook hands. It was not quite the way in which his elder and favourite master would have spoken to him; but there was joy enough in the purport of the speech; and if anything could have raised the drooping strength of his mother, when he went home after this, it would have been the look on Philip's face as he said, "It's all right, mother! I'm quite cleared."

For Mary's strength was at last failing. She had borne

much ; and with the necessity for exertion being taken away by Grace being there, she could no longer keep up, and for a few days she required all their care. But her patient quietness brought her through this, as well as through her other troubles ; and before Grace went back to Redlands, she had seen the children playing in the garden, Mary with a calm smile watching them, from a chair placed in the warm sunshine, and Miles able with the aid of Philip's arm to walk the whole length of the street they lived in ; and from him she carried a message to her uncle, which smoothed all past annoyances, and, together with the sad history she had to tell, rendered them all friends once more.

Two years after this, Grace was again with her friend Mary Corner ; in another house and another town, with a longer journey between it and Redlands, but not long enough to prevent occasional intercourse. Mr. Walker did not take Miles back again when he was strong enough to work, but he recommended him to a friend in large practice in a neighbouring town, where there was responsibility, but not more work than a delicate man could do. Here, in a very small house, with fewer comforts than they had married to, Miles and Mary had begun life once more, leaving Philip with Mr. Snelgrove, with every prospect of advancement, and Annie in the nursery at the Squire's of the village in which Miles was born.

But both Philip and Annie were over for a holiday ; they had come with Grace to stand as sponsors for another

little Mary, who was to be baptized the next day. And as Grace followed Mary and Miles to church, and saw the happy reverence which had become habitual to both of them, as they joined in the Easter Tuesday service, and the earnestness with which they gave their infant to the Lord, she thought of the tribulation through which they had passed, and believed that it had indeed "worked in them a hope which should never make them ashamed."

David Hewson.

"Blessed are the meek : for they shall inherit the earth."

"Thine own meek self to me impart,
Thy lofty hope, Thy lowly prayer."—KEBLE.

I was one fine morning in the month of July, that Mrs. Graham was sitting in the recess formed by her large bow-window, before her writing-table. She was busy with her accounts, and quite engrossed by them, until her attention was attracted by hearing through the open window the sound of voices in hot dispute. They were voices that she loved too, those of her only children, Alwyn and Rosamond, and Mrs. Graham rose up from her writing-table, and rather eagerly looked out. On the gravel walk not far from her, was Alwyn, a handsome boy of about fourteen, swinging his riding-whip to and fro, with a provoking expression of scorn upon his face, and Rosamond, her dark eyes flashing with anger, and her cheeks quite red, speaking very quickly, and certainly with too much warmth.

Mrs. Graham's movements made Rosamond look round—"There is mamma," said she; "I will ask her."

"What is it, my dear?" said her mother, stepping out. "Well, mamma," answered Rosamond, coming to meet her, "now, is it true that boys may do so many things that

girls may not? I'm sure it is very horrid of boys to cheat their masters, and to send little boys errands for them out of bounds, and to lay plots to revenge themselves on monitors, and so, Alwyn, I don't care, I shall just tell mamma of you."

"It is all stuff, mamma," said Alwyn, in a quiet, contemptuous tone; "don't believe her; I was just cramming her with some school-stories, when all at once she twisted round upon me with some moral sentiments that she had learnt at the Rectory when she was with those sweet raw-boned friends of hers, or else from her governess, and because I laughed at her priggishness, she is down upon me in this way. I wish we had her at school, that is all; we would soon teach her a little more respect for her elders."

"I think boys learn nothing at school but to be rude to girls," said Rosamond, showing a disposition to finish off with a burst of tears.

"That's not true," said Alwyn; "at least, if you refer to gentlemen."

"It would be more like a gentleman," said Mrs. Graham, "if you were to drop the present subject of dispute, whatever it may be, and treat your sister with a little more politeness."

"Of course," muttered Master Alwyn below his breath, "I am always put upon. It is a regular shame." And he looked very angry, and switched his whip so violently that he scattered the petals of a delicate white rose that had unluckily stretched itself out from the trellis-work; he then kicked some gravel up with his boot, and finally conveyed himself and his bad humour through the shrubbery, out of sight.

“What have you been doing to vex your brother so?” said Mrs. Graham, after she had sadly watched him turn the corner of the house. “It should be your part to keep Alwyn’s holidays free from annoyance, not to quarrel with him. You know how easily he is made angry, and how much he regrets it afterwards.”

“I could not help it, mamma,” said the little girl, now bursting into tears. “I was only telling him about the bazaar, and Clara Maynard, and her uncle blaming her so unjustly for staying so long, when it was all Mary’s fault, and her bearing it all; and he said it was all very well for girls. And so I told him boys were just the same in those things, and he laughed at me, and called men, number one, and the lords of the creation, and that women should never do anything but what they are told, quite meekly; and before that, he had told me his stories about school, and I am sure they do very wrong there.”

“You have both been to blame, I see,” said Mrs. Graham. “Alwyn does not mean one quarter of what he says in his hastiness; but I think you have taken a poor way of convincing him that he was wrong. For rich and poor, men and women, old and young, there is but one rule: Bear and forbear. Obey them that have the rule over you. Live peaceably with all men. Be gentle. You had better go to your own room for the rest of the morning, and without considering what Alwyn may have said or done, think whether you yourself have kept this rule.” Rosamond, sadly troubled, crept away, and Mrs. Graham went to sit in a distant part of her pretty garden, where some tall elm-trees made a pleasant shade. She was still here, with a book in her hand, but her thoughts busy with living subjects, when she heard a firm, quick

step approaching, and looking up, saw Alwyn near her. She lowered her head again, without giving her usual smile of welcome, and he approached the seat less confidently. The little spaniel, Beauty, was more encouraging. It had been lying upon the skirt of Mrs. Graham's dress, but it now got up and fawned upon him. "Ah, little Beauty, are you there?" said Alwyn, and he raised him to his shoulder, the spaniel's favourite seat. His mother continued silent, and Alwyn fidgeted a little, playing with the dog, but not by any means at his ease, until at last he put Beauty down, and standing before Mrs. Graham, said—

"Mother, you are vexed with me for being in such a rage, but you have no idea how provoking Rosy was."

"I was grieved to see my son so weak," said Mrs. Graham.

"Weak, mother!" cried Alwyn; "that is the very thing that Rosy and I disagreed about. I hate weakness, and softness, and palaver, and giving way to people; as I told her, it was all very well for girls, of course they ought to keep themselves quiet, and look pretty and gentle, and so on; but for men, why there never was a great man yet that did not fight his way through thick and thin, nor one worth anything that allowed himself to be easily put down! When I said so, Rosy got vexed, and began with moral maxims out of Mavor's Spelling Book, and I could not stand that, of course; but I didn't mean to get into such a rage, and I am sorry for it; so please, mother, don't look at me in that way."

Mrs. Graham, as she looked at him, was looking into the probable future of this her fatherless son, and it was with anxiety that she did so. That impatience of con-

trol, that contempt for women, that mistaken idea of true heroism, how often has it led to the utter ruin of a boy.

"Alwyn," she said, "I accept your half apology. Come and sit down by me, and we will try to discuss the subject with a little more forbearance than either you or Rosamond has shown this morning. I agree with you in saying that girls must be gentle and obedient, but tell me where you find a warrant for saying that men should be riotous, self-asserting, and tyrannical."

"I did not say so, mother," said Alwyn, more quietly.

"Well, I am perhaps putting it too strongly. It is not so much the qualities you give your hero, as those that you deprive him of, that I objected to. That a man should fight his way through difficulties, is true enough ; but what weapons should he use ? You are fond of talking about the knights of olden time. The best of them were courteous, kind to all the weak, and only fierce with men who sought to trample on their country or religion. In these days men have not to put on a suit of armour, and go forth to defend their homes or their rights against savage enemies ; but they have battles to wage and heavy arms to wield ; they have to defend the weak ; they have always to stand up boldly on the side of Right ; and they have to take care that no enemy comes near to put down our holy religion."

"Oh, that is of course," said Alwyn ; "but that is not the sort of thing I mean."

"Perhaps not," said Mrs. Graham ; "but what I am speaking of is the only really glorious kind of warfare ; and only those who have first conquered themselves, can engage in it successfully. Arrogance and violence of

temper would be useless in such a crusade as this. Then again you say that no man worth anything ever allowed himself to be put down. Surely Moses, raised up for the preservation of God's chosen people, and yet a very meek man,—David, a king and a prophet, and yet bowing down to the earth, before the chastening of the Lord,—these should teach us that greatness and lowliness of mind may go together. But still further let us look at Him of whom Moses and David were but the types, to the Lord Himself, and listen to His precepts, and to His gracious voice when He calls upon the meek to come to Him. I know that all this is unpalatable to the proud and evil nature that is always warring in the heart of man ; but it is nevertheless a solemn truth that it is not the laurels of the earthly victor, nor the exultation of the man who has achieved great wealth or honour in the world, but the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, that is pleasing in the sight of God."

"Yes, mother," said Alwyn; "but that is all so different; I didn't mean about religion; but every day, at school for instance, do you mean that a fellow is to let himself be put out unfairly at cricket for instance, and not to speak? You would not like to see me a muff, mother, that I'm pretty sure of."

"If you mean a coward, that I am sure I should not," said Mrs. Graham, looking fondly on the spirited countenance before her; "for what is right and good, I would always have you stand up boldly, and be afraid of nothing—of neither pain nor persecution; but I would rather that you should even give up a point in your games than rouse ill-feeling, and certainly, my dear Alwyn, I should like to see you submit more willingly not only to

a difference of opinion in an argument, but to reproof, if it were even not well-merited."

Alwyn blushed, for he knew well enough how proudly his spirit always rose against any authority however lawful; but he remained silent, and his mother continued—

"Speaking of cricket reminds me of an old friend of your grandfather's. Let me see," looking at her watch, "I think we shall have time before dinner. Sit down again, Alwyn, and I will tell you about him."

"Where is Rosy, mother?" said Alwyn, obeying her, not by sitting on the bench, but by flinging himself on the turf at her feet, where he composed himself to attention, in his laziest attitude.

"I sent your sister away to recollect herself," said Mrs. Graham, "for I agree with you so far, Alwyn, that however unbecoming violence is in any one, it is particularly so in a woman—so this morning's work has exiled her."

Master Alwyn gave a little impatient turn at these words, and he might have perhaps pleaded for her, had not his mother at once begun her story.

You know that my father lived at Craig Hall, about thirty miles from here. It is now in the hands of strangers, but I hope to take you and Rosamond there some day, at least to see the neighbourhood. My father was very delicate; his mother had died at his birth, and the grief of his surviving parent had most probably prevented his receiving the jealous care that his fragile nature needed. At any rate, I have been told that the first thing that roused my grandfather from the morbid state into which he had fallen, was the dreadful illness which Alwyn—you are called after him, you know—had when he was about

seven years old. The village doctor gave him up, and the nurse begging for further advice, my grandfather was at last roused up, and the child's life was saved. The London physician, however, gave it as his opinion, that great care would be required, perhaps for years, before he could be reared into a strong man. He was to run wild, to have playfellows, and few lessons. These directions were carried out successfully, and the child became year by year more robust.

When he grew old enough to need more instruction than his nurse could give him, he had a tutor; but it was always understood that his health was to be the first consideration.

One of the means provided for his recreation was a village cricket club, of which he was a sort of leader from the time that he was ten years old. The club used to meet in the park, where a nice level ground was prepared for them. Alwyn was a very skilful player, but some of the Craig lads were equal to him, and very stiff matches were often played between them and the neighbouring villages.

I have often heard my father describe with glee the merry days they had. Generally, the matches did not begin till afternoon, that the lads might not take a whole day's holiday; then any decent person was admitted through the lodge gates, and sisters and friends used to don their gayest ribbons, and come to sit under the trees, and watch their brothers and perhaps their lovers play at cricket.

On my father's birthday, they always made a whole day of it, and the players finished with a supper spread either in a tent or barn, according to the weather, for the birthday was in autumn, when sometimes the days

were cold. One year especially, when my father was fourteen years old, great preparations were being made for this annual feast. Every evening found a number of the village lads upon the cricket-ground, and the reports of the skill of the neighbouring clubs against which they were to measure themselves excited their efforts to the utmost. One of the best amongst them was a boy called David Hewson ; but how he gained his good style of batting no one could tell, for he scarcely ever had time to play. He was an orphan, who had been adopted by his uncle, a farmer in the parish. This uncle was a harsh, rough man, and although he had indeed taken his brother's child out of charity, every one said that the farmer intended to make it worth his while, so much work did he get out of him, so little did he spend upon the lad. The worst was, that he had a son, whom he treated very differently, and Matthew, taking his cue from his father, seemed to think that his poor cousin was meant for nothing but to be bullied and made use of.

The chance of a good game at cricket would have been far enough from David, had he not happened one day to be sent an errand across the park, when the young squire was just looking out for some boy to field for him, and seizing upon David for the purpose, he soon observed how well he handled the ball, and before long found out that David could play nearly as well as he did himself.

"Where did you learn to play?" cried the young gentleman, "and why didn't you ask to join the club?"

"I often played at home at D——, when I was a little boy," said David, sadly ; "but I am farm-boy now at my uncle's at the Heugh, and I cannot be spared to play."

"We will see to that," said my father, and he soon put

David in the club, and when he did not come to play, went himself to ask the reason.

Mr. Hewson, the uncle, was quite savage at the idea of his nephew thus idling away his time, but he did not like to offend the son of his good landlord, so David was sometimes allowed to go. It was, however, no great pleasure to him, for if anything went wrong when he was away, or for some time afterwards, it was all set down to the cricket, and David was punished for it, if it could in any way be brought round to him. Worse than that, the young gentleman's fancy for David aroused Matthew's jealousy, and there was no end to the sly ways in which he revenged himself, and paid David off for what he called his impudence.

Never was a word worse applied than impudence to David. He was particularly quiet and respectful in his manners to all who were older than himself, or whose superior station demanded it. His language was good, and his tone of speaking much better than Matthew's, whilst he had the most wonderful self-control for one so young. All this he owed to the teaching of his mother. She had been a person of good education and of piety, and she had not only trained David in kind and forbearing and courteous ways, but she had also taught him why it must be so, because he had been made a member of the Lord Jesus, who had left His Majesty on High, to set His disciples an example of these lowly virtues. As may be supposed, it was a hard trial to him to leave the home where he had spent so many happy years, with this gentle mother. He had also had the advantage of attending a very good school ; and all this had to be given up when he came to the Heugh.

Instead of living in peace and cleanliness, occupied in pursuits that he liked, he was at once made worse than a servant—for he had no independence. From break of day he was hard at work foddering the cattle, feeding pigs, ploughing, or carting manure, whilst scraps of food that the others would have grumbled at, were thought good enough for him; and, meanwhile, he was thrown for companionship upon two rough young men, whose conversation was coarse and sometimes wicked, and who only jeered at David's better ways.

There was no complaining, however, even in David's mind. His lot in life was changed, and he accepted it, pursuing his straightforward course, taking the good that came in his way, and feasting upon his contented mind in lack of other fare. At odd times, minutes now and then, he contrived to snatch a little reading from his old school-books, which he kept at the bottom of his chest; and, dwelling upon what he thus acquired, and reflecting upon what he every day observed, he had quietly gone on his way until the Wednesday when my father asked him to field for him.

From that day a change both pleasant and otherwise came upon his life. My father's kindness, and his manner, more like his mother's and that of his old companions, was very sweet to him; whilst, as I have heard, on the other hand, my father took at once a great fancy to him. His countenance was so open, the brown hair curled round a forehead that showed both talent and reflection; and the blue eyes looked up so truthfully, that it seemed to Alwyn's youthful fancy, a David, such as the young shepherd king of old, who stood before him. Unhappily, however, as I said, there was also an ugly side to the matter,

and David's position at the farm was not improved since he was seen in such high company.

There was cricket in the park every night, and when the eleven was being picked out for the birthday match, the young squire said David Hewson must be one. His name, therefore, was put down ; but he never came to play. Matthew was asked about it, and he said David could not be spared. Opposition only serving to make Master Alwyn more determined, he sent messages to desire that David might be sent ; and these being of no avail, the next time he went out riding with his tutor, he requested that the horses' heads might be turned in the direction of Mr. Hewson's farm.

They had the trouble of opening a good many gates for nothing ; for when they reached the house, they found none but women at home.

"As we might have expected," said Mr. Seymour, "at this time of day."

Alwyn, however, was not yet satisfied, and a few inquiries having informed them where the farmer was likely to be found, the indulgent tutor was easily persuaded to ride in that direction. They went through some fields towards the spot where the harvesting was going on, and had crossed one clear stubble, and were riding under the shelter of a high old-fashioned hedge, when they suddenly heard the sound of blows descending sharply, and a loud scolding voice accompanying them. In another minute they had arrived at a gate, and saw the owner of the angry voice, Mr. Hewson, standing up in a large waggon beating David violently with a leather strap, whilst the horse leisurely pursued its way along the rutty road, as if it had nothing but a quiet load of corn behind it. My

father, brought up so tenderly, was speechless for a moment ; the next, he called out, "Oh, Mr. Hewson, Mr. Hewson, pray stop. Why are you beating David?"

"Because he is a lazy good-for-nothing, sir," said Mr. Hewson, surlily, turning away from his nephew to check the horse, and then touching his hat to the two gentlemen.

"He looks very unlike it," said my father, warmly. "David, my boy, come away ; I won't see you so ill-treated ; I am sure that my father will not allow it."

Poor David ! he had blushed the most fiery red as soon as the gentlemen appeared. The mortification of being thus seen seemed greater than the pain of his uncle's blows, and he now held his head down, without replying.

"Come away, David," said my father again, "and I will take care of you."

"Thank you, Master Alwyn," said the boy, at last ; "but I must stay here. It is true, sir, that I was clumsy at the wheat. I have not been used to it ; but I shall improve, I hope."

"How can you bear it?" cried Alwyn, quite in a passion at David's meekness. "I shall see about it, Mr. Hewson, you may depend upon it ; and I want David for my cricket-match to-morrow ; the least you can do is to let him come."

"I don't wish to disoblige you, Master Craig," said the farmer, keeping pretty civil with great difficulty ; "but I must tell you that not a man or boy about the place can be spared to-morrow—not for cricket-matches, nor anything else either."

My dear father, so little accustomed to be contradicted, paused for some reply by which he might be able to crush

the farmer at once ; and Mr. Seymour, taking advantage of the pause, came forward, and, in a tone that his pupil understood, said :—

“Mr. Hewson, of course you have a right to manage your household as you like ; and it is only Master Craig’s great wish to have your nephew in his eleven that makes him interfere so far. If you are unwilling to grant this favour, there is no more to be said ; and I can only hope that the way in which David has received your punishment may incline you to deal more leniently with him in future.”

The tutor’s speech made much impression upon the angry farmer, and he muttered something like, “it was no more than the lad deserved ;” but he looked rather sheepish as Mr. Seymour, without taking any further notice, made a sign to Alwyn to follow him, and turned back through the gate again.

Alwyn, however, would not go until he had said a few more words. “Never mind, David,” he called out ; “I will see about it. You sha’n’t be treated in that brutal manner ;” and then he rode away.

Nothing but the happy circumstance of a cart of wheat appearing at that moment, and distracting his attention, would have prevented Mr. Hewson from repaying these ill-judged words upon David’s shoulders.

“Very imprudent of you, my boy,” said Mr. Seymour, as soon as they had got out of hearing. “Don’t you see that you are only making Hewson regard the boy with still more bitter feelings ?”

“But, sir, he had no business to treat him so cruelly. It is shameful. I shall certainly speak to papa about it. David must be removed from such a cruel guardian. And

then to refuse his coming to my birthday. It is dreadful tyranny."

"As for the punishment, whether deserved or not," said Mr. Seymour, "I fear that it was no more than he had a right to inflict upon him; and with regard to the cricket-match, I believe it was unreasonable in us to expect the farmer, in weather like this, to give up the smallest pair of hands."

To Alwyn's annoyance, his father took the same view of the subject; and he was obliged to be glad of the assistance of a school-friend who was staying in the neighbourhood, and who was, in good truth, an excellent substitute for David. Matthew came, with his weasel face, to Alwyn's fancy filled with petty triumph; but he was bowled out for 1 and 0, and I am afraid that my father on both occasions watched his crest-fallen return from the wicket with great pleasure, although the loss to the eleven was serious.

The nurses, when he was in petticoats, used to say, "If Master Alwyn takes a thing into his little head, he never lets it drop;" and certainly it was so with his partiality for David Hewson. Mr. Seymour restrained him where his interference with the affairs of uncle and nephew would have been unseemly, but he contrived to see David frequently, to ascertain his ways of going on, and to help him in every way he could.

Not that he could know all the petty miseries that David had to undergo. One day such as the young lad frequently passed through would have killed my father speedily. For instance, suppose it was a Saturday—he would rise at daybreak, dress as tidily as his miserable accommodations would allow, and say his prayers, with

the accompaniment of his companions' jeers (not yet tired out), and then go out to his employment ; when, probably, in the middle of it, the farmer would come up to him, and desire to know why something else had been neglected, and cuff him well for what was indeed no fault of his. When they were called in for breakfast, he fared no better. "I'm not going to take that, missus," one of the rough men would say. "Then hand it over to David, there ; he may be thankful for it ;" and with sadness, caused more by the unkindness than the sourness of the milk, he would sup it quietly. Not unfrequently, Matthew would play him some trick or other, such as letting the calves out again as soon as he had housed them, so that David might have the trouble of doing it over again, and perhaps be blamed, too, for his neglect ; and the utmost that ever David said was—"Matthew, some day I shall have to tell your father how it is ; for it is scarcely right to let you go on doing so." Then the men, following their master's example, put work on David that was really too heavy for his young body, and he was often so wearied at nights that his life seemed a burden to him.

But it was not always so ; there was sweet refreshment for him sometimes, at least in summer evenings, for then he used to find some retired corner out-of-doors, and, with an old book in his hand, would try to recall what he had done at school, and learn a little, if possible ; and it was in this that my father, as soon as he found it out, was able to assist him.

He lent him more books ; and sometimes he even left his beloved cricket, for the sake of sitting apart with David, hearing his difficulties, and to the best of his knowledge—he was not forward then—helping him to

solve them. And this put a scheme into his head, which he let my grandfather have no rest until he consented to. It was that David should be taken from the Heugh altogether, and put to a school for the sons of yeomen which was in our county town ; and for the future he had visions of David's being steward of part, at least, of the estates, so that their paths in life might not be entirely separated. And he persuaded his father to lose no time in speaking to Hewson about the matter ; but, in the mean time, he could not resist confiding it to the principal person concerned himself.

David's eyes sparkled as Alwyn detailed the scheme, not holding back its ultimate object, and there was no reserve in the poor lad's gratitude, and his hopes that his uncle might consent.

"Consent," cried Alwyn, "why even Mr. Seymour, who is the most prudent person in the world, always suggesting possible objections, has never thought that your uncle could refuse. Remember you would be off his hands entirely ; and surely you would be justified in taking your own course, did he attempt to deprive you of such an obvious advantage."

David shook his head and was about to reply, when a cry of "Matthew, it's your turn," was heard ; and Matthew not appearing, a lot of boys began searching for him, and finally dragged him out from his hiding-place, in the hollow trunk of the tree before which my father and David had been sitting, and they were too much startled by this discovery to go on with their conversation.

The next day was Sunday, a fine bright Sunday in October, and David—in his best clothes, now threadbare, and too small for him—set off to the Sunday school.

That he should go there undisturbed had been a privilege secured to him by the clergyman, in consequence of a hint from Mr. Seymour. The farm servants had many a joke at him, but he did not mind them. As he came near the gate that led out of the farmyard into the adjoining pasture, he saw Matthew leaning against it, lazily cracking nuts out of his pocket.

"I've been thinking, Davy," said this amiable cousin, "that thy Sunday suit will be worth anything for father's new scarecrow next spring. Wilt thou be done with them by then?"

"I should be glad to exchange them now for some better clothes," said David, good humouredly, as he came near to unlatch the gate.

"Oh, oh!" cried Matthew, at that moment shuffling himself in front, so that David could not approach; "thy clothes are not good enough for thy company, I warrant. But where's the young squire's cast-off coat; he might dress up his monkey surely."

"Let me open the gate, Matthew, please," said David, quietly.

"Please, please," sneered Matthew. "I should like to learn manners at thy school. Goodness me, there's a jump!"

Without another word, David had gone back a few steps, given a run, and then taken the gate at a flying leap. Matthew stood aghast, and felt something like admiration at the agile escape of his victim.

What good that jump did to David, Matthew could not tell. He did not know what a rush of angry feelings half-choked poor David as he caught the insolent expression of his cousin's face; how he had longed to knock

him down, and might have done so, had not his habitual self-control come to his assistance ; and how, as he said to my father afterwards, " It was so strong a temptation that I ran away."

The morning was, as we have said, clear and bright, with a touch of frost ; but the beauty of the sun shining on the glistening blades of grass, the heaps of snowy clouds near the horizon, and the pretty colours of the changing woods, were quite lost on David as he crossed the fields busy with his thoughts. He was dreaming on a future such as Alwyn had painted for him ; no more petty persecutions, nor privations, nor unkind, sneering relatives, but the opportunity of going on with the learning he loved so much, and the prospect of being some day useful in return to the young gentleman whose regard he fully and gratefully returned.

By the time he reached the school he had made himself so happy with his anticipations that even his teacher noticed the brightness of his face, and, catching a gleam from the joyfulness of his favourite scholar, he taught the class with more than his usual warmth and earnestness. But very soon David's airy visions were dispelled. As he crossed the churchyard with his companions, his uncle and Matthew were just coming through the gate. Matthew's eye caught his, and a sneering smile crossed his face ; he said something to his father, who scowled at him. It was as if a cloud had crossed the sun.

" He will not let me go," said David to himself ; and immediately a host of bitter thoughts crossed his mind. It was well for him he acquired the habit of casting off all worldly thoughts as he entered church. " How amiable are Thy dwellings, O Lord of Hosts." " The Lord

is in His holy place, let all the isles keep silence before Him," were some of the verses that his mother had taught him to think of always as he entered the sanctuary of the Prince of Peace ; and thus solemnized, he was ready to join in the confession, and to think of his own sins, rather than of those of others. "Take My yoke upon you," presently sounded in his ears, his anger seemed to melt away, and before he left that holy place, he could say, "My Saviour, I am Thine ; guide me, for I know nothing as I ought ;" and then he was free—free from all wrath, and bitterness, and desire for clamour—and no longer a slave to the devilish feelings that for a short time had held him in their sway.

The next morning Mr. Hewson went to see my grandfather by appointment, and David went to take up turnips for the sheep. He worked with all his might, as usual, and came in to dinner apparently quite calm ; but his heart beat when he saw his uncle, who, however, never spoke to him during the meal. As he was, however, turning away with the men-servants after it was over, Hewson called out after him,—

"David, it's as well that you should know you need not foster those fine ideas in your head. I'm not going to let you be at the beck of yon young gentleman ; and so you know, and you may settle down again."

"Master's been fighting him, I expect. I wouldn't be in David Hewson's shoes for something," said one of the farming men to the other ; for as they passed the open door of one of the stables, they had seen David lying, face downwards, on a heap of straw, heaving with sobs. Nevertheless David joined them in the turnip-fields before they had fairly got to work again.

"My mother gave me into uncle's care. She told me to obey him. I must submit, and make the best of it. It is to God I am submitting. Let me bear what seemeth to Him good."

Such were the thoughts that had broken forth from the dark mists of his distress, and he did not let them go again, but driving away all that could have roused rebellious ones instead, he soon became once more the active and even cheerful helper at the Heugh.

And thus another year had passed away. October and November had come round again. The winter had already set in severely, and it was a bitter evening, with a strong north-easter blowing, when Hewson came home from the weekly market. His first call, as usual, was for David, and, as usual, his call was answered promptly.

David took the horse, and with it some harsh orders about getting some fresh straw, and then Hewson went in to get his tea with Matthew and his wife. He had only just sat down, when David returned. "Uncle," he cried, "the barn is on fire."

The horror of fire in a lone farm-house is very great, and, regardless of everything else, the master dashed down the saucer of tea he was raising to his lips, and hastened into the yard, whilst his wife screamed, and Matthew turned as pale as death.

David had taken the precaution to shut the barn-door after him, but when the farmer opened it to look in, the smoke made him hastily retreat again. It was plain that the fire had already taken great hold of the unthrashed corn, and might burst out in flames at any time.

"Take the grey mare," said Hewson, "and ride as

fast as you can to B—— for the fire-engine. We may be burnt to the ground before morning."

"Let us shut the door, uncle, first, and I'll bring the engine as fast as possible," said David; and in a few seconds he had saddled the mare, and was on her back, and soon galloping towards the nearest town. As he passed through the village, which was more than half a mile off, he called out, "Fire," and begged the people to go to his uncle's help, and "take pails, cans, anything with you," he shouted, "to get water from the pond."

In an hour and a half David had been to the town, and back, and, leaving the spent mare to rest at the inn, had got a place on the engine with the fire brigade. But during that hour and a half what mischief had been done! The flames had soon burst out from the barn, consumed the intermediate farm-buildings, and the wind setting in that direction, had reached the house, which being old and built in great part of wood, could not be expected to resist the destroying element. To appease its violence, small supplies of water were being continually brought by an irregular crowd from the pond a hundred yards off, where, icy cold as it was, two brave women were standing up to their knees baling it out in pails.

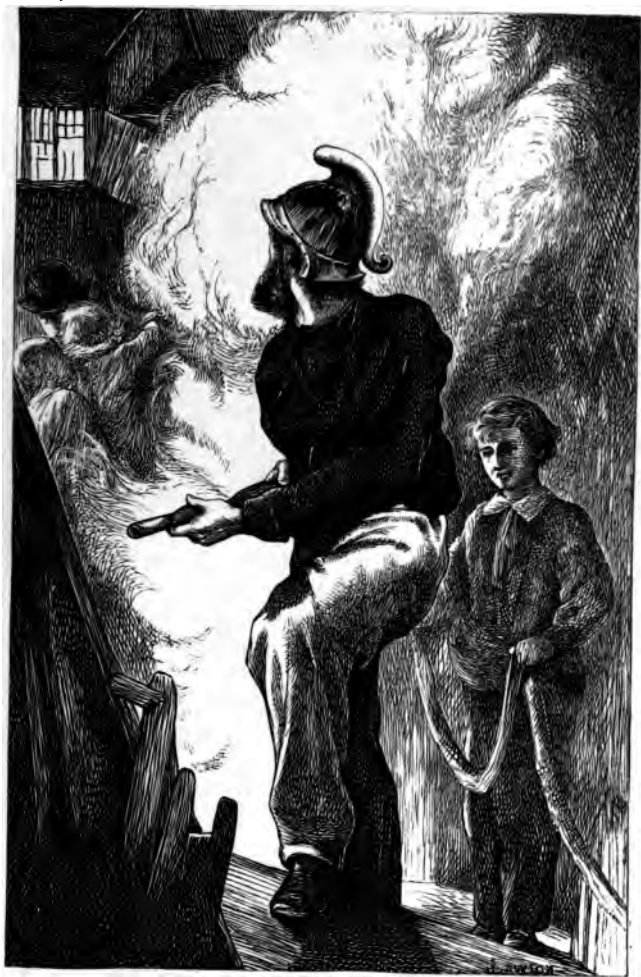
The sound of heavy wheels seemed the signal of deliverance, and the arrival of the engine was hailed with cheers. Some brigade officers drove up directly afterwards, and by their management a system was introduced, files of men obedient to order took the place of the self-directing, almost useless crowd, and the force of the engine was brought to bear upon the fire.

David was one of the most active, and, Matthew having

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The arrival of the Fire Brigade.—P. 154.

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disappeared, and Hewson rushing about in a helpless state of distraction, he was appealed to for all information, both by the county policemen and the gentlemen, his relation to the house having become known to them. Splendid, indeed, were the humane exertions made by all. Had the engine been upon the spot at first, no doubt the house would have been saved ; but with that cruel blast, so little could be done, and the morning's light showed a mere shell remaining of the Heugh.

My grandfather and the old steward had arrived about the same time as the engine. Alwyn had begged to be permitted to accompany them ; but cold and excitement were likely to be so dangerous for him, that he was obliged to be contented with their promise to look especially after David. Accordingly, when, towards morning, it became evident that nothing more could be done than play upon the smouldering heaps, and my grandfather prepared to return home, he sent the steward to offer hospitality to the strangers who had worked so hard in their willing service of charity, and to tell David that he must shelter at the Hall. But his uncle was wandering about, wild and pale, and Matthew was still missing : so David would not go so far away.

There was the farmhouse near, to which Mrs. Hewson, screaming and kicking, had been conveyed early in the evening, offering a hearty welcome : so David prevailed upon his uncle to let him lead him there, and then he returned to see after the furniture and the few valuables that had been rescued from the flames.

These were packed into a large cowhouse that was separate from the farm, the door was safely padlocked, and then, and not till then, did David remember his own

wearied limbs and scorched hands, and listen to the invitation of the kind, hearty neighbours: "Come, lad, come! you must be very nigh dead. There's breakfast ready and waiting—so, come along!"

Then David followed them to the house where his aunt and uncle had taken refuge; and there, too, devouring cakes and beef with great apparent relish, sat his cousin Matt.

"Where have you been, Matthew, all the time?" was David's natural inquiry; but it met with no satisfactory reply: so he gave himself up to the pleasant occupation of satisfying his hunger, answering by the way the numerous questions by which he was assailed.

As soon as the meal was over, they all went out again, to view the desolation that the night's work had caused. The police were on the spot, busily engaged in trying to find out the origin of the fire. A pipe found among the ruins seemed to suggest a cause like that of many similar disasters. Some one had perhaps been smoking in the granary.

"Hast thou?" said Hewson, turning suddenly round upon his nephew, who was near him.

"No, uncle, I never did," he answered, readily.

"Well, that is a famous lie," said Matthew, coming forward in a fuss; "I've often seen you about with a pipe in your mouth."

The complete injustice of this false accusation seemed to take away David's breath for a moment; but whilst the police-inspector was regarding the two boys with a searching gaze, he recovered speech, and said, "You are quite mistaken, Matthew; I never had a pipe between my lips."

No more was needed, however, to inflame his uncle's ire. He caught David by the collar, and called upon the policeman to take him into custody, declaring that, if it was true, he would have him hanged for it.

"We have scarcely enough grounds for suspicion at present," said the constable; "only one young man's word against the other. If their pockets were turned out, some traces might be found; tobacco generally leaves some small matter behind it."

"Yes, father, search him," said Matthew, in a nervous, hurried way, and beginning to move away himself directly.

"You too, sir, if you please," said the policeman, stepping at the other side of him.

Matthew began to tremble. David had already produced the few articles, including a little old prayer-book, which were all the possessions he had about him, and had turned his pockets inside out.

"Have I your leave, sir," said the officer, "for the same thing here?" (pointing to Matthew). "It is but fair."

Hewson, ignorant of how far the power of the man might go, muttered a consent; and the policeman, putting skilful hands into Matthew's pockets, quickly drew out a parcel of tobacco and some matches, and held them up before the father's eyes.

Matthew, a coward as well as bully, began to cry, and say he was sure he couldn't help it, he never meant to set the barn on fire, and finally crouched down upon his knees. Whilst in this position, his father gave him a kick which sent him sprawling his length upon the ground, and another to make him get up again.

"Out of my sight," he cried. "Here am I ruined, and

all by your vagabond ways. Get away, there is no home for you ; you may break stones on the road now ; I'll have no more to do with you."

And the wretched Matthew crept away to get his mother to take his part, as she had always done in the few instances in which his father's anger had fallen upon the rightful person.

Meanwhile, it was quite true that the farmer was half-ruined. It appeared that he had neglected to pay the last assurance that had become due, so that the loss of crops and furniture all fell upon him to an alarming degree. My grandfather was very kind to him ; but he had no heart to go on farming, he said, even if he could have started afresh, and he was thankful to procure a small place as bailiff in the neighbourhood ; whilst Matthew had to go out to service—a kind of life for which he was quite unfitted, and which of course he found most irksome.

In the midst of these changes came the question, what was to become of David ? Then my father stepped forward, and, with renewed hope, proposed his scheme.

"Certainly," said Hewson, sadly. "You may have him to do what you like with. He was the best amongst us, only we did not know it."

So David at first was lodged at the old steward's, and he and Alwyn saw each other continually ; then he went to an excellent school, where he fully justified the kindness of his friends. I never saw him, for he was afterwards sent somewhere to learn business ; but I often heard his name. I have been told stories of his meekness under all provocations, of his firmness against evil, of his patience in trial ; and I believe that he was the means of leading my dear father to a knowledge of those blessed

truths that shed comfort on his young declining days. Alwyn, your grandfather, died, as you know, when I was five years old ; and after his father's death the estate passed to the hands of a very distant relative. I have often wondered what became of the man whom my father called his friend, but I have rarely mentioned the subject ; and it was only your disbelief in the possibility of meekness being united with manly qualities that made me recall what I have heard chiefly from the lips of my dear grandfather. But there is poor Rosamond, looking very downcast, at the drawing-room window. Let us go in to her.

About a week from this time, Mrs. Graham, probably spurred up to the exertion by the story she had told her son, fulfilled her intention of taking both her children to see her birthplace, the residence of Alwyn Craig.

The present owner was abroad, so she expected to be able to pass over the place with freedom. They went by a train which started early in the morning, in order that they might have a good long day ; but Mrs. Graham told her servants that it was not unlikely they might not return until the next, as she wished to do as circumstances prompted her.

It was only ten o'clock when they arrived at the end of their railway journey—an ancient city, which possessed, amongst other objects of interest, a fine old cathedral. The deep bell was tolling for service as they drove through the market to the principal inn, and, leaving their small baggage there, they gladly seized the opportunity of attending the morning prayers. The musical service was

a great treat to the young ones ; but the novelty of it somewhat distracted their attention, and Rosamond looked up in wonder at their next neighbour, an old man of venerable appearance, with long silver hair, who joined in all the responses with a thin, quavering voice, and appeared completely wrapt in his devotions.

After the service was over, they spent some time in admiring the grand cathedral, whilst Mrs. Graham recalled the time when, as a little child, she had come here with her grandfather, and had been frightened, even to tears, by its vast extent and the hollow sound of voices and their footsteps.

When they came out into the busy town again, the transition from its cool shades to the midday sun of July was so overpowering that they hastened to procure a carriage in which to perform the rest of their journey, about seven miles. The drive was too warm to be very pleasant ; but Mrs. Graham was interested all the time in recalling places that she knew, and telling her children all that she could recollect about them.

Before they entered the park, Mrs. Graham got out to speak to the lodge-keeper, whose father she had known, and then they drove to the steward's house, where, although personally unknown, Mrs. Graham easily obtained permission to wander about the grounds. That accomplished, the carriage was sent back to the village, to await their return, and Alwyn and Rosamond, carrying the basket of provision they had brought with them, followed their mother to a sort of grove, where, in the most perfect solitude, with no sound but that of the birds and a cascade of falling water near to them, they sat and ate and drank to their great refreshment. Then they pro-

ceeded to the house and gardens—now so changed and neglected, that Mrs. Graham made the round with pain, that was only relieved by the great delight the children had in seeing every nook and corner of the place where “mamma lived when she was a little girl.”

But they were not satisfied yet; the sight of the cricket-ground in the park reminded him of his mother's history, and Alwyn begged her also to show him the farm where David used to live. Rather reluctantly Mrs. Graham consented, and they took a short cut, a footpath from the park, through some fields to the Heugh. But there they were only disappointed; a straight, square house, as Rosamond said, with no traces of the fire, and nothing pretty about it; and except that they asked and obtained, from the good-humoured looking farmer's wife, a draught of fresh, new milk, they might as well not have gone. Better, perhaps; for as they turned away, they noticed some threatening clouds above them, and before they got off what once was Hewson's farm, a few large drops had fallen and there was every prospect of a storm.

“We must make haste into shelter,” said Mrs. Graham. “Here is a stile that I do not know, but this footpath must lead towards the village.”

They crossed the stile and found themselves in a well-kept walk, along which they trod with quickened steps; for there had just been a loud peal of thunder, which, though distant, warned them that there was no time to be lost. The footpath led them between two hedges into a plantation, through which Mrs. Graham hastened, trusting that every moment would bring them in sight of the gables of the rectory, which was the first house in the village. And as they emerged from the wood, they had

the comfort of seeing the tops of some ornamental chimneys just peeping at one side of the hill up which the footpath now led them. What was Mrs. Graham's surprise, however, to find, on reaching the brow of the hill, only a house by itself, covered with creeping roses, and a pretty lawn with flowerbeds in front of it. It was built near the summit of a sloping ground, and from where they stood the village could be seen a little way off, and beyond that the woods, and then the turrets of Craig Hall, on which just then a watery gleam was shining. The rain was now beginning to fall so heavily that there was no doubt that they must ask for shelter. Before they could reach the door to do so, however, the barking of a watch-dog brought some faces to the window, and the next minute a neat maid-servant came out with an umbrella, which she offered to Mrs. Graham, adding that master desired that they would walk in. They followed the maid into a little hall, where they were met by the young mistress of the house, who greeted them with a pleasant smile; but on seeing the dripping state to which the last five minutes' rain had reduced them, she cried, "Pray come in and dry yourselves. See, grandfather, they are half drowned. Rose, my dear, come and help the young lady. Surely the kitchen fire will be best for you. Grandfather, pray take the young gentleman into the parlour. Will you excuse the kitchen? What an awful storm!" and all the time she was speaking, she was leading the way to the back part of the house, and they were now in a kitchen where everything shone with cleanliness, and where the maid who had admitted them was standing ready to assist them.

"You have a nice bit of fire, I see, Jane," continued

their hostess, who probably talked so fast as much from shyness as from her real desire to make them welcome. "Stir it up, and these ladies will dry themselves. Get a horse to hang the cloaks upon."

A momentary pause in the flow of words gave Mrs. Graham an opportunity of expressing her acknowledgements. "I fear that we are giving you a great deal of trouble," she said, "but we are strangers and thankful for the shelter."

"I am glad that we were in the way to give you shelter," said her hostess, civilly. "My father saw you as he crossed the road half-an-hour ago, and he said you would be getting caught. It is very curious. Oh, Jane, don't be so silly. You should have heard your master just now when Miss Rose was frightened. He said, we are safe in the Almighty's hands. The Lord who thunders out of heaven is also our defence and refuge."

The reason for this was a vivid flash that had lighted up the tins on the wall, and made Jane give a jump and scream. It was closely followed by a crackling, rolling peal of thunder, which made the bravest of them look very solemn and stand quite still.

"It is an awful storm," repeated their hostess, whilst an anxious look crossed her face, "and my husband and son are out in it."

"Mother," said a clear voice from the passage, "grandfather says these ladies and the gentleman had better have some warm beer or tea, and if they are not obliged to go on their journey, they had better stay all night."

"We shall be happy if you will do so," said the mother, turning to Mrs. Graham. "We have two rooms well-

aired, for they have only just been vacated by my boys who have gone to school."

The offer was made warmly, but Mrs. Graham could not think of putting them to such inconvenience. If they might have shelter for a while, they hoped the storm would soon abate, and allow them to reach the village, where they had left their carriage. Some hot tea, however, was not refused; and Rosamond, attired for the present in a clean Holland dress of Rose's, and Mrs. Graham in a cotton one of the mother's, both not having been put on without much amusement, they proceeded to the parlour, where the welcome refreshment had been set out for them. To Rosamond's surprise, their host turned out to be the same venerable old man who had sat next to them in the cathedral. They were received by him with great cordiality. He had noticed our party three times to-day, he said, and had been close to them during morning service, so he could not look upon them quite as strangers; and as they sat down in the pleasant sitting-room, which was full of the traces of rational employment, Mrs. Graham felt quite drawn towards the kind old man. Rosamond, too, cast friendly glances at her modest, smooth-haired namesake; but they exchanged no words as yet. As for Alwyn, in his silly pride, he had an idea that he greatly condescended in sitting down in this way with people, who, though so nice in their manners and thoroughly respectable, were not what he considered gentlefolks; and ignorant as he was of that bond of Christian brotherhood, which, whilst it fully respects all difference of worldly position, holds all its members in one common band, he held aloof whilst his mother and the old man conversed.

"I am, as you may see, much interested in this neighbourhood," said Mrs. Graham. "Although this is actually my first visit since I was married, and, indeed, for some years before, my childhood was all spent here."

"And mine too," said the old man. "You see those turrets yonder, madam ; I built this house within sight of them, because they are connected with my earliest remembrances."

"And with mine too," said Mrs. Graham, regarding him with a searching look, "for I was born there."

"Madam," he said, rising with tottering limbs, and stretching out his hands, "you do not mean that you are the daughter of the gentleman who called me friend ?"

"Are you David ?" asked Mrs. Graham in return ; and then, as she too rose and shook hands with him, her eyes were moistened with an emotion that responded to the tears that were running down Mr. Hewson's cheeks. The others looked on with wonder ; Alwyn alone knew the circumstances which so affected them.

"You will not refuse my hospitality now, Mrs. Graham," said the old man, after some few more words had passed. "To think that I should have lived to receive the grandchildren of my friend beneath my roof. Daughter, help me to entertain them. She is called Rosamond after you, madam, and one of the boys is Alwyn Craig Hewson ; the names, we thought, should not die out of our remembrance."

There was no need to urge Mrs. Philipson to hospitality ; but as she was going out to give her orders for the entertainment of her guests, she met her husband and eldest son coming in quite drenched. Her first care, therefore,

was for them ; and, meanwhile, the old grandfather was giving some sketch of his past life.

"I never knew you," said Mrs. Graham, "except as connected with days long gone by. Where were you at the time of my father's death?"

"I went into a land agent's office," he replied, "after I left school, with a view to succeeding poor old Stephens. His life, however, was prolonged beyond the usual term of years ; and whilst I was still at the land-surveyor's, an agent was required for some business in Canada, and my employers proposed that I should go. I consented readily, for it gave me an opportunity of taking out my cousin Matthew ; his father was dead, and he was doing very badly in England. I thought that very likely I could place him out in Canada. I did so, and he succeeded beyond my hopes. But when I returned, my friend was dead. No one knows how deeply I mourned for him ; it was some time before I could bring my spirit to submit entirely to the will of God. The day the old steward died, the Squire, your grandfather, madam, died also, and I still had my way to make in the world. This, however, I was determined to do ; and looking back upon my life, as I often do when I sit alone in this arm-chair, it seems that everything I undertook with all my might, and persevered in, prospered. I believe there is no more true proverb than that 'God helps those who help themselves.' At the same time, madam, I must say before your son, who has the world to begin yet, that I only refer to that determination which springs from a faithful spirit. I will do this, God helping me, I often said ; and I was always helped beyond my best deserts. Things prospered with me. I married a true, loving woman

and had her for ten happy years. When she died, she left me this daughter whom you see. She is a woman who needs no praise of a partial father ; her praise is beyond rubies, for she possesses the most precious ornament, the only ornament that she can take with her when she follows me to the Promised Land—this young lady may, perhaps, guess what it is.

At that moment, Mrs. Philipson, his daughter, came back into the room with a large cake in her hand, with which she meant to tempt the appetite of her young guests. The old father's eye rested on her lovingly ; and, indeed, from her gentle countenance, it would appear that his affection was not misplaced. Her husband, an active and clever young farmer, and his intelligent son, followed her, and were introduced to the strangers. Supper, an abundant meal, rich in country luxuries, succeeded ; and after that the household were gathered together to offer prayers and praises to the Blessed Creator whom their master had so early sought, and then they retired to rest.

The morning was calm and bright with no trace of the preceding storm, and so calm and so bright was the face of the old man as he took leave of his cherished guests.

"Ah, my children," said Mrs. Graham, as they regained their own home that night. "I have been thinking much of my father's friend, of David Hewson the old man ; and it seems to me that nothing suits him so well in his life here, and in his hope for hereafter, as the words we should do well to engrave upon our hearts, 'Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.'"

Magdalen.

"Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness:
for they shall be filled."

"Plying their daily task with busier feet,
Because their secret souls a holy strain repeat."—KEBLE.

IT was August in London, a season when people say that London is empty. Certainly in the parts where those people live who can afford to go to town for two or three months, and can spend the rest of the year in the country—in the squares of large, handsome houses—the blinds were down, the shutters closed, and signs of emptiness showed themselves. Where but a short time before, carriages full of gay ladies were rolling along, all was now quiet; to an experienced eye it might seem that the shops were dressed with less care, and articles offered at reduced prices. Further on in this great city, the same change had taken place to some extent. All the well off take this opportunity of going away, indeed all who can scrape up the means try to leave London at this time. They are sick of dust and streets and heat, and the never-ceasing roll and rumble, and they pine for one good long breath of sweet, fresh, unused-up air; and they rush off to Margate, Scarborough, or the Continent, according as their means or their tastes may lead.

But there are hosts of people left behind who cannot attain this luxury. They must stay all the year round in the mighty Babylon. Would that some of those who live in country villages, where every breath they draw supplies them with pure, untainted air ; where their eyes can be gladdened by the sight of clear blue sky, or beautifully-formed clouds, or of woods and streams, the grassy plain or rich cornfields ; would that they remembered to be thankful to Him who "watereth the hills from above, and filleth all the earth with the fruit of His works."

It may be, however, that the annual emptying of London that I have alluded to, leaves a little more breathing room for those who are left behind ; for it is true that August days are often bright and invigorating, and it was on one of these that a young woman called Magdalen Cooper, might be seen wending her way soberly through a quiet street in the neighbourhood of Soho Square.

Magdalen had not always lived in London ; she was born in a pretty village in the South of England. Her father was a blacksmith, and his father had been the same before him, both steady, plodding men, saving money, buying little bits of property, and respected by their neighbours. Anne, the mother, was a very superior person ; she had been for many years head housemaid in Sir William Trenholm's family, and had improved all her opportunities, so that when she was married to John Cooper, a nicer-mannered, better-spoken woman could scarcely have been found anywhere.

It was a pleasant home that John brought her to. The open forge was shaded by a very fine large elm-tree

that grew within the hedge of a neighbouring pasture, in which he kept a cow, and close to the forge stood the house, well-furnished and comfortable. The rest of the village, with the church and school, stood nearer to the brow of the steep hill, down which led the old coaching road from London, and the nearest house was a wayside inn, kept by one Mr. Andas, which, in those coaching times, had been of much importance.

Every one said that Cooper had done well for himself in marrying Anne, for she brought what was of more value than her savings, clean, refined habits, which she took good care not to lose, as too many nice servants do after they are married, and a sweet temper, ready to make the best of everything. As John pursued his laborious occupation, he might always be refreshed by the certainty that not only a clean dwelling, but a contented, pleasant wife was close at hand.

Their eldest child was a girl. She was called Magdalen, after Anne's own mother, and was very like her, Anne always said, with regular small features, but a grave expression, sometimes, but rarely, broken by a sweet smile.

"You mean her to be a lady, Anne," said a neighbour to her one day, with something of an envious sneer. "You keep her so fine."

"Nay, why do you say that, Mrs. Simmonds?" said Anne, looking at the little creature on her lap, her skin so smooth and fair, her clothes as white and spotless as they could be. "Cleanliness is next to godliness, and godliness is what I most desire for her; but my little Magdalen was not born to be what you call 'a lady.'"

"It's all very well with the first," continued Mrs.

Simmonds, scarcely heeding the reply ; "I had a white frock for my Sarah, and it served them all to be christened in, but wait till you have half a dozen, and then you'll see."

Anne only smiled, but she was never tried by having such a family, for by the time Magdalen was five years old, and Nathan was scarcely three, Anne had faded away, and left the children motherless. Not, however, without a mother's influence ; not before she had been permitted to sow the seeds of what she so much desired for them. So impressed, indeed, had the little grave Magdalen been with her mother's lessons, that in after years she could scarcely believe that she had been so young when the dim, shadowy form of that mother had gone from beside her. But the neighbours knew what a tiny child it was, that, weird-like, on the night of Anne Cooper's death, had hushed the sturdy brother into silence, by sitting beside him on the floor, and telling him that the angels were taking "mother" to Heaven, he must be quiet. "Whisht, honey," she said, like an old nurse, and holding a mite of a finger to enforce her words ; "Nathan must be good, Jesus loves him, he must be good. The angels will come to take both Magdy and Nathan too, when they are good enough," and that hope and that desire never left Magdalen all her life.

After Anne's death, a sister of Cooper's, who had lived with him before he was married, came back to take care of him and the children. This sister had not much liked to turn out for the fine lady wife, as she considered Anne ; and coming back again, she was the sort of person to scoff at the habits Anne had introduced, and to

try and make the children as unlike her as possible. But Cooper, though easy about house-matters generally, was stout enough as soon as he perceived what Jane was after, and when his first sad, "She liked it so, let it go on," was disregarded, he spoke out, and showed that he was resolved to reverence his good wife's memory in the best way, by retaining all things that his conscience and affection told him were right.

From this time, many habits that Jane thought quite unnecessary, but which were, in fact, excellent for the health and well-being of the children were kept up. Cleanliness and free supplies of fresh air by night and day were secured to them, no rude words were allowed, nor rough ways, and they obeyed at a word, and not a blow. Their father himself heard them their little prayers and hymns, and every Sunday saw him leading Magdalen, and, as soon as he was old enough, the little boy, to church. Aunt Jane's counter-influence was useful one way; it is likely that without her, Nathan might have been completely spoiled by what she called Magdalen's dollying after him, for the child's imitation of her mother was extraordinary; and long after he could help himself, she would have attended to him as if he were a baby, had not Aunt Jane roughly but wisely put a stop to it, and persuaded Cooper to send the little girl to the village-school, where, in the old-fashioned way, boys and girls were taught together.

It is often said that a school is like the world in miniature, and it certainly was like an introduction into the world for Magdalen. She had contentedly played in the paddock with Nathan, or stood in the doorway of the forge to watch the sparks flying from under her father's

hammer, and the regular "tack-a-hack" that shaped the iron shoe so wonderfully, or on wet days had taken Nathan out of Aunt Jane's way into an empty room there was upstairs ; and so had known little or nothing of even the small part of the world that the village of Adlington contained. But that was now at an end ; Magdalen was of a reflecting turn, but not unsociable, and once thrown amongst her little fellow-creatures, she began to take great interest in them. An interest that had painful results to her at first, for as soon as her eyes had become accustomed to the numbers, and her ears to the noise, she began to be astonished at the naughty ways she saw in those around her, the disobedience, the squabbling, and, above all, the deceit of children not much older than herself. At first the grave eyes only opened in wonder, but after a while she would speak reproving words to the worst of her neighbours ; and as she was at the same time so good herself that she was held up as a pattern by the master, it was no marvel that she became the object of derision and persecution ; and one day when she left school, a whole crowd of little tormenters gathered round her. Her frock was plucked at, her net torn off with jeers, and at last one boy, who had been the ringleader, snatched her workbag out of her hands, and raced down the hill with it, followed by a triumphant, shouting multitude. Her workbag, with the handkerchief she was hemming for her father, and the scissors, and the thimble, and the ivory needle-case, that had been her mother's. Oh, it was hard to bear, and Magdalen, after one hopeless glance after the riotous crew, ran home to the forge first, and finding no one there, into the house, crying with passion most unusual

to her, "Aunt, they've taken my workbag—they're all wicked boys and girls—they're running down the hill with my workbag."

"Heyday," said Aunt Jane, who was lifting the boiling tea-kettle off the fire. "What's she making such a fuss about? Run away with your bag, d'ye say? Run after them, and get it then. They'll not hurt ye."

"Yes, they will, aunt, they're so rude, and they say bad words," said Magdalen, with the tears streaming down.

"Hout, tout, child," said the aunt, turning round to look at her. "What, she needn't cry about it. She's naughty to cry. Run and fetch brother in to tea. You'll get your bag back, I'll warrant ye."

Still crying and uncomforted, Magdalen went as she was bid to seek Nathan, and he, on the first sight of her, rushing from the heap of stones with which he was constructing a small pig-stye, was soon made acquainted with her trouble. She had little idea of the effect it would have upon him. Flushing up with anger, he clenched his hands, and ran out at the gate, crying, "Where are they? I will make them——"

He had not far to go; the children were all under the elm-trees, waiting in the hope that Magdalen would come out again, and afford them some more sport. No sooner did Nathan catch sight of them, than he went up to a boy, called Robert Andas, who was at least four years older than himself, and said, in his baby way of speaking, "Give me Magdy's bag. It is very wicked to steal her bag. You are a fief. I will make you——" A loud burst of laughter was the natural response to this threat on the part of a six years old champion. Nathan was

rather roughly raised in Robert's arms, and what would have been the end is doubtful, had not Mr. Merton, the curate, at that moment, stepped out of a cottage near; and Andas, who was only a bully when he was the biggest there, threw the child down upon the turf, dashed the bag after him, and, calling out to the others to come and fish for minnows in the river, led them at full speed down the hill, in search of a different kind of game.

It may seem strange, but that was the last row, the last kind of quarrel Magdalen had with her school-fellows. Young as she was, she felt so much ashamed of her naughtiness that day, that none of their efforts could rouse her to passion afterwards; and from being her persecutor, Robert Andas, touched by her patience, became a sort of rough protector towards her, and things went very smoothly until Nathan also went to school; then her troubles began again. Nathan was at times idle, and easily led away by Andas, the ringleader of mischief; and to persuade him back again, to avoid irritating Robert, and to keep herself from feeling naughty, as she called it, was Magdalen's trial in her village school life. But she passed through it nobly, and when at fifteen she left the school, the girls had lost their kindest helper, the mistress her pattern workwoman, and the master the pupil whose sex he had never ceased to regret, for had Magdalen been but a boy, he could have taken her further in algebra than any village boy had ever gone; the only person in the school well satisfied being Nathan, for he could still come to her when he was in a scrape, and it was nicer to have her always to attend to things at home, than watching him at school. There was one place, however, where Magdalen was still in the midst of those young people

whom she most valued. That was at the Sunday school. As soon as she was confirmed, she and two of her companions were offered a class to teach, instead of being any longer pupils, and gladly she accepted it, not because it raised her above her former classmates, but simply because she could impart some of the good things she had learnt herself. Like the Apostle St. Andrew, she wanted to show the Lord to all His little ones. How this warmed up all her teaching ! If she taught a little hymn or prayer, it was in the hope that the child's heart might move with its lips, and speak to God in the words she gave it ; or was it the catechism, she tried to impress both words and meaning on the little ones, that from their earliest years they might know the doctrine of Christ's Holy Church ; whilst as soon as they were old enough to read the Bible itself, her own reverence was a lesson to them, for she told them to regard it as the greatest treasure they possessed, the book that taught them all about heaven, and holiness, and in which they might hear the voice of God. I can fancy I see her now as I did one Easter-Sunday, when she was about seventeen years of age. Her face pale, as it had been when she was an infant, her hair and eyes dark brown, her features small and refined, and a grave expression over them. It is said that a woman's dress affords the index to her character. At any rate, modesty or the reverse is plainly shown in the apparel, and it was so with Magdalen. She was not vain, nor did she spend much time in thinking over what she should wear, but her clothes were always neat, and especially on Sunday was she mindful to have on all her best, sure that there would be no unbecoming finery, but all suitable to her station. A merino for winter, a fine

print, or light grey stuff for summer, such as she now wore, a black silk cape, and a bonnet tastefully trimmed with white. No one could have come into the school-room without thinking what a very nice-looking girl that is, but no one could have supposed for a moment that she was thinking herself about her looks. She was wrapt in her employment, in her ardent desire after the religious improvement of her little scholars ; and when in the evening she attended the evening-class at the rectory, as a scholar herself, it was the same thing ; she was in earnest in all she did, single-minded, with an eye only to the glory of God. The same principle was at work in her daily life at home, and it made her, young as she was, a person to be trusted in by all, whilst to her father she was a treasured companion. He was a man who had read a good deal and thought more, and when he found that he had an intelligent listener in his daughter, he used to open out, until his sister, a person who rarely thought of anything beyond saving and cleaning, was astonished at his cleverness. Aunt Jane, however, had for some time been jealous of Magdalen, and it was well for all parties that a joiner in the neighbourhood was looking round for some one to take care of his motherless children, and thinking that he could not find a better helpmate than the woman who had turned out such a fine girl as Magdalen, asked Jane to marry him, and she agreed. John made as handsome presents as he could to the sister who had come to him in his need, and Magdalen stitched away most industriously to help on the preparations, and it was, if not a gay, at least a most respectable wedding ; but it is not to be denied that when Magdalen rose early the next morning, and began to prepare her

father's breakfast, without fear of comment or complaint, she felt pleasantly independent, and thought of many little improvements that would conduce to her father's comfort. It is probable that both the father and Nathan were also well satisfied to have their sweet-faced Magdalen to attend to their comforts, instead of Aunt Jane, whose voice was stern and always ready pitched for scolding, and whose eyes seemed only given her for the purpose of picking out flaws in people. At any rate, they were all very happy together; but one change often brings another, and it was just about this time that Nathan was first seized with a desire to leave the home which he now perhaps for the first time had thoroughly enjoyed. He had, as a matter of course, as soon as his father thought he had received schooling enough, been placed in the forge, with a view to his succeeding his father and his grandfather in the family business, but Nathan could not bear the forge, nor the idea of spending his life in Adlington; if he had a wish about his trade, it was to be something of an architect, and about his dwelling-place that it might ultimately be London. Magdalen knew where he had imbibed both his ambition and his restlessness; it was from Robert Andas, who had now a situation in the nearest town, and who was always counselling his former schoolfellow to come out and see the world, and she was much puzzled between her sorrow that her father should be disappointed, and her sympathy with Nathan when he dilated warmly upon what he might be, had he but a chance like other lads, and upon his belief that nobody ever yet did any good in a trade that he had no turn for. It was rather a stormy and unhappy time, whilst Nathan sullenly considered himself a victim,

and his father was aggrieved at the rebellious feelings of his son ; but Magdalen made peace as much as ever she could, until at last she felt that anyhow Nathan had better go, and it was a relief to all when an opportunity occurred for him to be placed with a builder in the next town, the only drawback in her mind being what seemed to others an advantage, that he should occupy lodgings in a house very near to Robert Andas's. One consequence Magdalen had not dwelt upon nor Nathan either, and that was that they would be parted, for the first time in their lives, but they felt it no less when it really did occur. Nathan, to be sure, had all the delights of comparative independence to compensate him, and his new companions ; in a short time, he had too, pursuits, which could not have borne the scrutiny of his grave sister, dear as she was, so, on the whole, it was better, and he intended to come over to spend every Sunday with her and his father. As for Magdalen, she missed him dreadfully, and she had besides the care of being not quite sure of him, and of feeling half ashamed of her distrust ; but she turned from all that as soon as possible to the present duty, that of making up to her father for the sacrifice he had made for Nathan, and if care and tenderness would avail, he was compensated. John was now getting into years, and loved quietness best, so that neighbours, who saw Magdalen's devotion to him, said, "She was a good lass, but she must be sadly moped."

Moped ! What a word to use about Magdalen ! They little understood either the word or her, who called her so. Surely they had not been invited to step into her clean house, where the very fire-irons, pots, and pans looked cheerful, because they caught the sunbeams on

their polished sides ; where solid, handsome furniture was arranged to the best advantage, and where Magdalen herself, with a heart at ease, was moving about her work—now preparing the dinner with a carefulness that a French cook might have desired in his kitchen-maids, so clean and skilful were her hands, or making the folds of her father's Sunday shirt shine again with well-starched glossiness. Perhaps they had not seen her after the light loaves had been taken out of the oven, and the tea-things set, seated with her needlework near the window, with the evening light passing through the large myrtle, and bringing out the rich brown of her dark hair ; whilst her quiet, happy song mingled with the sharper notes of the canary bird that hung above her head. No, not moping ; these were peaceful days such as suited Magdalen—the time had not yet come for her to be stirred up to a different life. She was contented just to do everything that came to her hand with all her might ; what she heard at church was acted out at home ; she had but one great aim—to do what was right. The world's wickedness was almost unknown to her ; her standard was taken from a higher source than its maxims, she could not have explained it herself, but, in truth, her one sole, pure-minded desire was to live after the example of her Saviour Christ—and this desire was sufficient for her happiness.

Magdalen was nineteen before any great trouble came to ruffle the calm flow of her existence, and that did not come suddenly, but by degrees dawning upon her ; and the first sign of it was when Nathan ceased to come regularly, and the Sunday when he did not appear had to be passed in a struggle to lay aside the worldly care, which was caused not only by her own fears but by her father's

annoyance and uneasiness. When two or three weeks passed, he would say—"Strange that Nathan comes so seldom now. Well, they're all alike, I suppose. As Andas says—'Out of sight, ought of mind with most young men.' He might, however, remember his old father sometimes. It will not be for long."

There was plenty in speeches like these to make Magdalen uneasy. A cloud over her father's face was always sadness to her, and to think of Nathan's neglecting this good parent was like wormwood; the mention of Andas, too, always gave her queer feelings, whilst the allusion to his failing strength, which was too often now on Cooper's lips, was too painful to be entertained willingly for a moment. It was well for Magdalen when she learnt that the only way to subdue these anxieties was to turn each and all of them into a prayer. Then the sense of heavenly care and protection came to soothe her, and the trial itself served only to deepen her faith, and to render her better fitted to bear the reality of which the forthcoming shadow now troubled her.

"Cooper has failed a good deal lately," said the villagers. "Do you air his linen well, Magdalen?" said her aunt; "your father has looked badly ever since I left your house."

"It is that cold he had last autumn, I think," said Magdalen; "he'll be better when spring weather comes." Still, every time he coughed, the sound of it went through her; and at the end of a few weeks more, she wrote to Nathan and begged him to come over soon, "for," she said, "her father was not looking well, and it was a constant fret that Nathan did not come."

The next Saturday, as Magdalen was bending rather

sadly over a drawer that she was tidying, and her back turned towards the door, an old, familiar sound of "Well, Magdy," struck upon her ear, and she turned with delight to see Nathan standing close beside her. His affectionate greeting, as she kissed him with joyful tears in her eyes, left nothing to be desired. They went out together to seek the father, who spared all reproaches in his welcome, and Magdalen's busy preparations left her no time for any but happy feelings. It was not until after the father had gone to bed at his usual early hour, that she seemed to have a good look at Nathan, but then, casting her loving eyes upon him, she noticed how much he was grown—taller even than father, she said.

"Head and shoulders above you, my girl," said Nathan. "But, Magdy, what has been the matter with father? You should have told me."

"There has been nothing the matter," replied Magdalen "except his cough. I did tell you about that, you know."

"Perhaps you did," said he, but he was now leaning his head against the mantelpiece, and returned such short answers that his sister gave up trying to talk, and they soon went to bed. Sunday morning always gave Magdalen a joyful waking, as she habitually repeated—"This is the day of the Lord, we will rejoice and be glad in it;" but on this Sunday there seemed to be no earthly care to mar her happiness as she hastened downstairs at an early hour to perform the few household duties that were required. It was true that the bright morning sun showed strange worn lines in Nathan's face, but Magdalen only saw the affectionate smile that greeted her, and the first drawback was when, after breakfast, he said that he should just step over and see Bob Andas.

"Robert Andas?" repeated Magdalen; "he surely is not here?"

"Why not?" returned her brother; "he came in by train last night. We walked together from the station."

That was natural enough, seeing that Andas also had friends at Adlington, but Magdalen's perfect tranquillity was gone, and it was only what she expected that she and her father had to go alone to church, neither of them believing what they said to each other, that probably Nathan was already there. Of course he was not, but he met them in coming home, and in spite of his father's grave looks, tried to say in an off-hand way that he and Bob had been to look at the old hazel copse, to see what prospect of nuts there was, and had missed their time coming back again, but he was not easy in his manner.

After they had had their dinner, and Magdalen had made all tidy, and had seen her father seated comfortably in the sunshine under the elm-tree, for it was a fine warm spring day, she prepared as usual to go to the Sunday school.

"Nathan, will you come and meet me as you used to do?" she said, and her sweet eyes looked so anxious that Nathan promised, although he had had different plans for the afternoon.

And then Magdalen, full of content, went to her little scholars, and soon lost all other thoughts in her desire to do them good. How earnest she was in speaking to them of the Good Shepherd, as they read the Gospel for the day; how she told them of His tender love for the lambs of His fold, and how she tried to rouse in them, too, the desire to keep close to Him, to listen to His voice, to follow in His blessed steps of holiness and

peace. The little faces looked up and wondered as their teacher's words came burning forth ; and though they scarcely understood all she said to them, they had heard that Jesus loved them, and they were all determined to be good, and to love the things that Magdalen Cooper told them of.

It was with her mind still full of such sacred themes that she passed out, as soon as ever the school was over, to find her brother. Under the old trees on the hill Nathan was lounging about, waiting rather impatiently for her appearance. He received her with a smile and joke, and going down the hill together, they proceeded through the beech-woods that lined one side of the valley when you had turned away from the village. There was no deep shade as yet, the branches were not clothed with leaves, but the swelling buds gave roundness to their tracery. Here and there a thorn or wild currant bush had burst into tender green, and a pleasant smell of growth was in the air. The brother and sister strolled on very happily until they came to a more open part, where the wood ended in a line of noble trees, and a long slope of unbroken turf descended to the little stream that gathered the waters of the valley. Here they sat down on a fallen tree, and Magdalen began to arrange the primroses that Nathan had plucked as they came along.

" Little Nancy Todd brought me two tiny primroses a month ago," she said ; " the child had found them in the hollow near Alders Mill. Since then, I have not had one in my hand. I kept thinking that when you came, we would go a primrose gathering. Oh, how sweet they are ! "

"You were always such a girl for flowers," said Nathan. "Why did you wait for me?"

"Well, I don't like to leave father for long, and I think I have had no heart to go out walking, though Aunt Jane has sent Mary Atkins more than once to ask me. We have missed you so, Nathan dear."

Nathan had been switching a little stick he held impatiently against the ground. "Lads can't always be about their homes," and he spoke gloomily.

"No, I know that," said Magdalen; "but then you know, Nathan, we weren't quite like other people, with mother dying; somehow, we were more to each other. Besides, Nathan," she added, "I don't quite know how it is, but I—Nathan, you won't mind, but do you miss church when you are at B——?"

Nathan laughed an uneasy laugh. "You little saint," said he, "you live here so quiet, you think everybody is as good as you are yourself."

"I'm not good," said Magdalen, with a pained look; "I only wish I was. There is nothing in the world I wish for so much. No, nothing," she added, after thinking for a moment, "as to be good, never to have anything to do with what is evil. Oh, Nathan, look at that cherry-tree; the sun is shining on it, the branches are like snow, and you can see the deep blue sky between. Isn't it beautiful? There is nothing ugly about it at all. It is just as God made it, one might say, and so God made everything, you know, at first, white and pure, and shining with righteousness, and showing the light of heaven, like that blue sky behind the tree, and it is only sin that blackens and crooks and spoils everything."

"Well, you can't help that, my dear," said Nathan, rather in a flippant way, as if he didn't care at all.

"Oh! yes, we can," replied Magdalen, quickly. "Everybody can help to make everything beautiful again, if they like. Our Lord showed us how. He came to show us, to take away the sins of the whole world, as He says. Oh, is it not dreadful to think that every little bit of sin, bad thoughts, cross words, let alone great awful sins, that all these help to keep evil in the world, and hold the world back from being all beautiful as it was at first?"

"You go too far for me, Magdy," replied her brother; "but as I say, it is with living in this quiet village. If you went into other places, you would see that men, at least, couldn't be tied down as you would have them; speaking of going to church every Sunday, for instance, they may be good enough without that."

"I don't know," said Magdalen, "but it seems to me that the Lord Jesus holds out a lamp to us, as it were, and we must keep close to it, whether we are man or woman, busy or quiet, if we do not want to lose our way. You know He is called the Light of the World; well, should we not be glad to go where that Light shines brightest, not being dimmed with earthly things, and that surely is in church?"

"You are a dear little thing," said Nathan, looking round affectionately upon the face that was now flushed with earnestness; "but you don't understand, being always mewed up here with your own fancies. Some day you shall go to London with me, and see what a fine world it is that you are slighting so. If my father had

but gone to London when he was young, he would have been a man of fortune now."

"We have been a long time away from father now," said Magdalen, starting up. "It must be nearly tea-time; we had better be turning back."

Nathan made no objection, and they re-entered the thicker part of the wood, where the birds in every tree were pouring forth their varied notes.

"I mean to go to London as soon as ever I have done with Lucases," said Nathan, resuming the subject as they walked.

"It is a wonderful place, no doubt," said Magdalen. "Father was reading out of the papers, the other day, about the number of people living there, that if they were all marched out four abreast, it would take a week to clear the city, moving all the time."

"I dare say," said Nathan. "That is the place to see life, you may depend upon it, Magdy."

"Father was saying too how strange that he should never have been there," said Magdalen, "although living so near now that there is the railway. Poor mother knew as much of London as of any other place; for the family went up every year, and she always said that there was more quick movement for good or evil there, than in any other part of the world. It was only last Tuesday father was talking and saying that some day he and I should go and see its wonders."

"So you shall," returned Nathan, "as soon as I am settled there; see if you don't. Why, surely that is Bob."

Coming up the wood by another path, was a tall, strongly-built young man, with black hair and whiskers,

who would have been called handsome by those who did not care for an untruthful look in his dark eyes. This was Robert Andas, and as he approached our friends, he touched his shiny, black hat, and said, "I was looking for you, Nat. Good afternoon, Miss Cooper ; they told me that you had both come this way ; but I might have guessed that you would have been among the primroses. Sweets to the sweet, eh, Miss Cooper ?"

From the very first of their being children at school together, Magdalen had had the same kind of feelings towards Robert Andas. Strong regret for the wrong things he did, and a great desire, by any means, to persuade him to do better, and this interest prevented her from disliking him as much as she might have done ; but such silly words as these were always distasteful to her, and she would not smile or appear to notice them. His next proposal, to carry her posy, was no better received ; so although he had turned back with them uninvited, he was obliged to address his conversation chiefly to Nathan. Magdalen could not, however, but hear it, and there was a careless, free tone in all he said ; and he used so many strong words, which if not oaths were very near to it, that she was more than ever sorry that her precious time with Nathan had been so interrupted, but most of all when he said,—

"One thing I followed you for, Nat, besides, of course, the pleasure," and here a little bow to Magdalen conveyed his meaning, "was to see if you would set off after tea. It's a splendid evening for a walk, and I must be back to-night."

"Oh, Nathan," said Magdalen, quickly, "you are not going to-night—are you ?"

"I didn't mean to," said Nathan, doubtfully.

"Why, of course not," said Magdalen, indignantly, "when it is so long since father's seen you, and Sunday too;" and here she threw a glance at Andas, which expressed anything but gratitude for his interference.

This was quite enough for the latter; it had always been meat and drink to him to do a mischief, and the sight of Magdy Cooper in a rage, with a rosy flush on her pale cheeks, and an angry sparkle in her usually quiet eyes, was too great a temptation for him. He chuckled that he had been able to call up such a spirit in her, and he proceeded to press Nathan to go back with him, and beginning with side hits at Magdalen's allusion to Sunday, went on to such sneering and impiety, that she was sufficiently irritated, and just as they reached the village, she said, quite in a tremble of passion, though still in her soft voice,—

"Mr. Andas, if you have no respect for Sunday and holy things, you might let them alone who have."

"Certainly, Miss Cooper," replied Robert, with a pretence at politeness. "I'm obliged by your good opinion, and I shall take your advice. For the future, your brother Nathan may go his way, and I shall go mine. Good afternoon, miss," and so saying he turned in the direction that led to his father's house.

"Well, I hope you've vexed him enough," said Nathan, crossly, as they proceeded up the green. "You might know, Magdalen, that your pious ways wouldn't go down with such as him. A nice mess you've made for me, most likely."

"What do you mean?" said Magdalen, in a frightened tone. "How have I made a mess for you, Nathan?"

"Well, of course, a fellow doesn't like to be on bad terms with the man he lives with. You see that he has gone off quite offended, and he is not one to forget in a hurry, I can tell you."

"Do you live with him, Nathan? I did not know," said Magdalen.

"I dare say I never mentioned it," replied her brother, "no more need you. It is convenient in many ways, but that only makes this now the more disagreeable."

"I am very sorry, Nathan," said his sister, humbly. "I did very wrong to be so angry, that I know."

"There was nothing to make you fly out so, that I could see," said Nathan, modifying a little his scolding tone. "However, don't take on about it, Magdy; it is not often any one can find fault with you."

A few tears had forced themselves out of Magdalen's eyes; but she was too well accustomed to control herself to let them master her, so she only said,—

"But please, dear Nathan, do not think of going away to-night;" and when he replied hastily, "All right, we'll see," she walked into the house quite hopefully.

Except that she was paler even than usual, no one would have known that she was troubled. With a light active step, she moved about to get tea ready, put her primroses in water, attended to her father, and talked as usual. She was, however, carrying about with her a burdened heart. She was remembering her high professions only that afternoon; and although she could acquit herself of hypocrisy, for she knew that it was out of the fullness of her heart that she had spoken, yet she saw that she must distrust the feelings of the moment; and she learnt that those whose aspirations were the highest and the

holiest, might easily become entangled with grovelling cares, and even fall into the sin against which they have been themselves protesting. She had made a quarrel, been rude to Andas, and had given cause to Nathan, her dear younger brother, to reprove her justly, who had thought to teach him.

"I was right in what I said to him," thought poor Magdalen; "but, oh! it was not I who should have said it, who so easily fall away. If mother were but alive;" and thus deeply humbled, her tender conscience found no comfort until she had, upon her knees at church, confessed that she was indeed an "unworthy servant."

Nathan went with them to church. His father had said, "Give us an arm to-night, my lad; I'm not so strong as I used to be;" and of course, Nathan, whatever his previous intentions might have been, could not refuse. It was nice to see the lad, tall and straight as he was, supporting his father's steps so carefully. No doubt his father felt happy in it too; for he talked more than he had done for a long time, told stories of old times, of his long courtship of their mother, and even went back to the days of his own boyhood, which had been passed in this house, where his grandfather had also lived.

"Times are changed now," he said, "men are not content, let alone being proud as they ought to be, to live in the same house, and in the same way as their fathers have done before them; so I shall not tie you, Nathan, by any promises but these, that you will never sell this bit of property, and that you will always take care of Magdalen."

The father spoke quite calmly, and as a matter-of-course; but his words struck a strange chill over both his

children. Nathan was uncertain what to answer, when his father stopped and looked at him, and he faltered out, "I will, father, but——" and there he hesitated.

"I know what you mean, my dear," said his father; "but life is uncertain, and it is better to settle things quietly, whilst one can do it so. You are both good children; stick to each other when I am gone, and never forget that you are Christians."

He had no inclination, it seemed, to say much more after this, and very soon he rose up to go to bed. "I suppose you will be off before I am up in the morning," he said to Nathan. "Good-night, God bless you." And to Magdalen he was about to say the same, with his hand fondly stroking her head, as his habit was, when, all at once, he stopped, and looking up, they saw a strange contraction working down one side of his face. Much alarmed, they both threw their arms around him, and, half carrying him, contrived to lay him on the wooden settle that stood at one side of the fire-place. Magdalen, herself almost speechless with affright, supported his head tenderly, but was at a loss what else to do. "Aunt Jane," she said at last, and "the doctor," added Nathan; and loath as he was to leave her, he flew to bring them, calling, however, at Andas's by the way, to send some immediate help to Magdalen. Poor Nathan was almost beside himself; the doctor was at home, but he would not wait, and rushed back again in breathless excitement. Mrs. Andas had come immediately, and though no favourite, was very welcome to the solitary watcher, and was soon followed by Aunt Jane, quite ready to take the management of everything.

The doctor was not surprised; Cooper's health had

been failing for some time, and paralysis was what might have been feared. This was, however, but a slight attack, he might be almost like himself in the morning ; and the children, who had thought no less than that he was dying, might have been comforted, had not all the doctor's words pointed to an improvement as being but temporary. The conversation of Mrs. Andas and Aunt Jane was not calculated to remove their fears.

"Ay, ay," groaned Mrs. Andas, "I've seen him failing long enough. His father went just in the same way."

And Aunt Jane remembered the many times in which his neglect of her advice had led to what she felt sure would be fatal consequences.

It was a sore trouble to come on the young things so suddenly, and it was no wonder that they took it rather badly at first ; but when Magdalen saw Nathan crying, then she roused herself, and, like a true woman, forgot her own sorrow to comfort his. "Oh, Nathan, dear," she said, "what a good thing that you were here to-day, and that we have been so nicely altogether—was it to-day, though, or yesterday ? I seem to forget," and as she spoke her eyes fell on the clock, which pointed to an hour after midnight, that had never seen the quiet Magdalen out of bed before. She soon recovered herself again, and returned to her attempts at comforting her brother ; but he was oppressed with many things that she knew not of, and he could not, as she did, raise his heart to heaven, and say, "O Lord, in Thee would I put my trust. Be Thou my refuge in time of trouble. Oh, go not from me, for trouble is hard at hand, and there is none to help me."

For many weary hours the brother and sister watched downstairs ; Magdalen not being allowed to do anything by Aunt Jane, who took all the management above ; and she was glad when the dawn of morning gave her an excuse to get breakfast ready, and still more when the doctor's promised visit came. So dismal had been the two women's forebodings all the night, that it was doubly a relief when the doctor came downstairs, and said to Magdalen,—

“ He'll do now. Your father is much better. You will have to keep him very quiet, and I doubt his ever recovering his speech entirely, but the immediate danger has passed away.”

Then Magdalen's tears flowed unrestrained for joy, and Nathan's spirits rose as if there were no future ill to dread ; but when, now that there was no longer any reason for him to delay, he went to bid his father good-bye, the poor man's struggles for speech were pitiful to witness, and it was sadly that he set off, promising to return next Saturday, and, followed by the wistful glances of his sister, went his way, haunted by the sweet sadness with which she tried to smile a farewell to him.

Soon after Nathan had gone, Mrs. Andas departed also, and afterwards Aunt Jane ; and then Magdalen was left once more alone with her father, just as she had been on Saturday, but what a change in their relative positions ! He, helpless and dependent on her ; she compelled to act for herself, deprived, perhaps, for ever of the counsel upon which she had always leaned. Well was it for Magdalen that she had early learnt to look for and desire a better country, so that when her pleasant earthly life was embittered, she could pour out her soul in prayer to

God, and feel a sure hope that when she was in misery, He would haste to help her.

This day was but the beginning of a long time of trial. For fifteen months John Cooper lived in the state in which that morning found him. He soon could walk about again ; but he was rather childish ; his memory and judgment were gone, and when he spoke, his words came so thick that strangers could not understand him. The forge had to be let, and they could have profitably let the house along with it, but the very idea of moving to another house put the old man about so much, that, in spite of Aunt Jane's saying, "He's silly, poor man, what's the use of minding him?" Magdalen would not give way, but determined to live on the money in the bank, rather than disturb his remaining days by moving him. Nathan agreed with and supported her. His very thoughtlessness made him laugh at his aunt's horror of their touching her brother's savings, whilst his pride would not brook his father's going to live in a little hired cottage ; so they lived on as usual, only with great care, and Magdalen took in fine sewing, in which she was very skilful, and when not needed by her father, or her household duties, spent every moment in the diligent pursuit of it.

But it was no little portion of her time that her poor father needed. He had to be dressed, helped with his food, and watched, lest he got into any difficulty, so that Magdalen never felt comfortable when he was out of her sight. That, indeed, he very rarely wished to be, for his daughter was truly both the light of his eyes and the prop of his old age, and if there was an earthly feeling in his breast not blunted by disease, it was his love for

her. In their highest interests, too, the poor father knew that his daughter sympathized with him. The piety of his life now met with its reward in the pleasure he took in spiritual things. Many times during every day a sort of brightness would come over his poor withered face, as Magdalen repeated texts or read to him ; and often when sitting at her work, she would sing one after another of the church hymns he knew so well, and he was never so little restless as when listening to them.

One day, a fine August day it was, she had persuaded him to sit on the bench under the elm-tree in the field, and she was sitting in front of him on a large stone, with her work in her hand, a pretty picture, as her clean lilac dress lay on the grass around her, and her glossy hair peeped from under the brim of her plain straw hat. Every now and then she raised her face with a pleasant smile to her father's, and said something cheerful, or she sang in her soft, rich voice, the verses that she knew he liked. Unconscious as she was of it, there was some one watching her all the while,—one who was quite regardless of the moral beauty of the picture, but who was gloating on the sight of her,—until, unable to remain at a distance any longer, he opened the gate, and walked up to her. Very far from a welcome was the cold but civil greeting that he received, and it required all his impudence to come forward as he did, to sit down beside the old man, and talk about his ailments and the village news, with his bold eyes fixed on Magdalen all the while. But the old man cared so little for what he said, and was so uneasy under it, that Magdalen tried to release him, and, wondering what had brought Robert Andas over so unexpectedly, asked if he had seen Nathan lately.

"Not since breakfast-time, Miss Cooper," answered Andas, pertly; "he was pretty hearty then."

"You don't often come over at this part of the week," said Magdalen.

"No, I don't," he answered. "You're pumping me, Miss Cooper, but I don't mind telling you that I had business in N——, and took Adlington in my way. What I did that for, if you will walk round the field with me, I shall have much pleasure in telling you."

Magdalen looked up in wonder and curiosity; she had no wish to go anywhere with Robert Andas, but it flashed across her that there was something wrong with Nathan, and that Robert was considerate enough not to wish to mention it in her father's hearing: so quite hastily she got up, laid her work upon the bench, and saying, "Father, I'll be back directly, watch me walking round the pasture," she joined Robert, without, in her anxiety, observing the triumphant leer that disfigured his bad countenance.

"Is it anything about Nathan?" she asked breathlessly, as soon as a few hasty steps had carried them out of her father's hearing.

"Nathan! No, indeed," he answered. "It is about a far sweeter subject, my dear;" and with these words the fellow would have taken her hand.

Magdalen no sooner felt his touch, than her face became suffused with red; she started back, drew herself up, and exclaimed, "What do you mean, Robert Andas?"

"Mean?" he echoed, looking upon her with increased admiration, as she stood with dignity beside him. "Why, Magdalen, you've known what I have meant long enough, and I'm willing to wait till the old man there is gone;

but I must tell you that I love you ;” and then, seizing her hand, he poured out every protestation of affection, and asked her to be his wife.

There had not been wanting people who had teased Magdalen about Robert Andas. It was known that he was intimate with the brother, and that of late particularly he had often come over with Nathan on a Sunday, and always called on Magdalen ; but she, her mind pre-occupied, had not listened to them, nor regarded the fact that he often sat looking at her when he came, and that he often paid her little awkward attentions, to which she never gave the least encouragement ; and now that he, the man who drank and swore, and whom everybody had an ill-word against, should want her to marry him, quite astonished her. For a moment she was silent, the next her courage rose, she drew her hand away, and said,—

“ No, thank you, Robert Andas. I never knew what you meant. I did not know you were courting me, but be sure of this, I can never be your wife.”

And with these words she turned round, and made the best of her way back to the place where her father was still sitting, Robert following her all the way, with violent entreaties that she would listen to him, or give him some reason for not doing so. She returned no answer until they had nearly reached the tree, when she stopped and said, “ Why is it, Robert ? Because I don't like you ; but, more than that, if I had got to be fond of you, your manner of life is not such as I could see any man lead who was to be my husband. It is kindly meant of you, Robert, and perhaps I am too plain-spoken about it, only I want to make it certain, once for all, that you and I could

never be more to each other than we are now. So I wish you well, and here we must part. Please don't let father see anything about it."

These last words were in almost an imploring tone, and she looked so pretty with her eyes sparkling through tears, and her cheeks flushed with agitation, that Robert, regardless of her decided words, broke out again, declaring that she should change him, that he would be a different man, and tried to tempt her with a picture of the easy life that she should lead, the nice house, the silk dresses he would provide for her, and that she should do with him and his just what she liked.

To this Magdalen did not reply a word, she had said her say, and she only gathered up her work, murmuring softly, "Now, father, we are going in, it is tea-time," and tenderly helped him to get up, as if she had no other object of attention. Robert watched with the countenance of a fiend, and he still stood watching as they passed through the gate, but when that closed, he hurried after them, and on their doorstep, he hissed rather than spoke into Magdalen's ear: "You have driven me wild, but you shall pay for it. Look out for you and yours, and when they're ruined, think of me."

How Magdalen got her father into his chair, and made up the fire, and set the tea, and fed him, she could not tell, for she seemed in a dream; she wanted to think things over, but her duties called her, and all she could do as yet, was to breathe a prayer for help and for forgiveness, wherever in the heat of the moment she might have spoken unadvisedly. And when she had leisure to consult with herself, what could she more than this, besides casting her fears and anxieties before her God?

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Robert Audas's visit to Magdalen.—P. 202.

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the door with a gentleness that was new to him, he stepped into the room.

The slight noise he made was quite enough to arouse her. She got up with an air of mingled fear and anger.

"Good evening, Miss Cooper," said Robert, in a friendly manner. He might have even offered to shake hands, but there was that in Magdalen's attitude that forbade his coming nearer.

"You might have knocked, Mr. Andas," said she; "we're scarcely fit to have people coming in to-night."

"I came on an errand that did not wait for knocking," said Andas, with a smile. "Despatch is the soul of business, they say, and Nathan has certainly done his business with despatch."

"Nathan!" said Magdalen. "Have you come to tell us anything of him? What is the matter? Please tell me directly. Is he ill?" Magdalen spoke as she had done from the beginning, in a very low, subdued voice, but now quick and earnestly.

"No, he is not ill," said Andas, mockingly; "at the same time, I cannot say he is well. At any rate, not well off, for he owes me a matter of forty pounds odd; and as Mr. Burrowes has turned him off without a character, and as our landlady, at the same time, requested him to move out of the lodgings, I feel uneasy about my money. He's run away, in fact, so I came to see if Mr. Cooper would have the kindness to discharge the debt."

Magdalen had been pale before, but she now turned as white as a sheet, her knees trembled, and she felt ready to sink upon the ground; but she only buried her face for a moment in her hands, and then she looked up again.

"This is a sad hearing, Mr. Andas; but, happily, my

father is not living to be grieved by it. He died this afternoon. As soon as he is buried, I will see about your debt. There will be money enough to pay you."

Then Magdalen stood still and straight, and Andas, for once thrown off his assurance, stammered out something about not knowing, or he wouldn't have come.

"I thought you did not know," said Magdalen, mildly. "You will go now then, please."

And enraged, disappointed, ashamed, and yet admiring her, Robert Andas, without another word, turned round and left the house.

Then poor Magdalen gave way entirely, and sinking upon the wooden settle, cried until her sobs brought down the women who had been upstairs. But it only seemed natural sorrow to them, "she was sure to take on, poor thing, when all was over;" and after their kindness had restored her to self-control, they left her to herself again.

She was sitting thus alone with her own sad thoughts, no longer engrossed by the remembrance of her dear father's peaceful end, but brought down to earth again, as it were, with bitter anxieties about her brother, when a shadow passed the window, and fearful of another such intrusion as the last, she got up to bolt the door. Before doing so, however, an impulse made her open it a little, and peeping out, she saw a figure standing near; and she was just going to speak, when she heard a voice in a hollow whisper say, "Magdy."

Then she threw the door wide open and clasped her brother in her arms, close and firm. He bent down and kissed her.

"Bless you, Magdy, dear, I'm going now."

"Going!" cried Magdalen. "Where, Nathan?"

"Never you mind," said he. "I could not go without seeing you, and you shall hear from me. Good bye."

But Magdalen still held him. "There's only us two now, Nathan. Father's dead. You and me, that's all. You wouldn't leave me, Nathan?"

He was easy enough to hold now, for all the strength had gone out of him: so she led him in beside the fire, and there, whilst he cried bitterly, she told him all about it.

At first his own difficulties and schemes seemed quite swallowed up in his grief for his father, but soon he remembered, and casting aside the caressing hand that his sister, with comforting words, had laid upon his, he cried,—"Oh, but, Magdy, you don't know what a wretch I am—how bad I've been. I've ruined myself and lost my situation, and got into such a debt as I shall never be able to pay."

"I know," said Magdalen, quietly; "it is very sad, Nathan, dear."

"You know?" echoed Nathan, raising his white face, all bleared with his passionate tears.

"Yes, Robert Andas has been to tell me," said Magdalen.

"The wretch, the villain," cried Nathan, striking his clenched fist upon the back of the wooden settle; "to come and tell you, to come and pain you, Magdy, when it is he that has been at the bottom of it all. Oh, I wish I had him here," and an expression of hatred crossed his face.

"Don't, Nathan, dear; don't," cried Magdalen. "Oh, honey, if you had seen father as I did this afternoon—

yes, it is only this afternoon, how long—how very long it seems ago ; but it was so beautiful, it made one think only of the world he was going to, where there will be nothing but peace and holiness—badness can't come there, nor hatred either."

"Then I can't," said Nathan, between his teeth.

"Oh, Nathan, don't say that," said Magdalen ; "you know we none of us could enter in but by the Lord Himself. It is He that is the Way in, and He that makes us fit to pass. You couldn't take those bad things there, but you will never do them any more ? Nathan, dear, you'll start afresh, won't you ?—just you and me, and we will try to walk in that way that leads to where father's gone. It is narrow—hard to pass through at times, but it is never quite dark, for the Sun of Righteousness shines upon it, and we can always look along it to the land where there is Eternal Day."

Her sweet words, by God's blessing, touched poor Nathan's soul. The return, at this moment, of their Aunt Jane, who had only left Magdalen for an hour or two, interrupted them for the present, but this was only the beginning of many precious words the fatherless had together during the next two days—when the desire after better things than those for which he had been perilling his everlasting welfare, was thoroughly awakened never to sleep again. Christ had given him light. "You and me," Magdalen had said, and she had determined that it should be so. The care of Nathan should be her first earthly concern, and well it was for her that she had this engrossing interest to fill up the void that was caused by her father's loss.

John Cooper, following the advice of his prudent wife,

had made a will some years before, so that there was no difficulty in settling his affairs. The property was to be divided between the children; one of them, if possible, was to live in the house, but if that could not be, they were never to sell it, unless required by extreme necessity. Mr. Andas, Robert's father, and Robson, aunt Jane's husband, were the executors; the latter had always appeared to be such a soft, aimless kind of man, that Magdalen could not help fearing that the Andases would have it all their own way, and she quite trembled when the explanations had to be made, and poor Nathan's miserable affairs opened out to him. She need not, however, have feared. Robson turned out to be a man of both judgment and principle, when he would trouble himself to exert it, and before long everything was settled hopefully.

The business was sold, the house let, and most of the furniture disposed of to the successor in the forge, and money raised to pay off Nathan's debts. They were then free to go where they liked, with a little money in hand, and the rent of the house and forge to depend upon. Nathan's wishes still pointed to Australia, where, in his despair, he had at first intended to fly to; but Aunt Jane opposed it strongly, and was supported by her husband for Magdalen's sake, who, although she would have done it without a murmur, could she have seen that it would be the best for Nathan, dreaded such a severance from their friends and country, and her father's grave. Whilst, however, they were living for a few weeks with their Aunt Jane, in a state of discomfort that was increased by the uncertainty of their future, an opportunity offered of placing Nathan in a most inferior capacity with an old

friend of their father's, who was in business in London ; and the chance being thankfully accepted, it thus turned out that Magdalen found herself making a new home in that mighty city where we first met with her. For five years she and her brother had lived in this part of London. A floor on the third story of a decent lodging-house had been their home, and, thanks to Magdalen's exertions, it was not unworthy of the name. Badly furnished, close, musty, and far from clean, it seemed at first to the country girl as if she could not breathe in such a place, nor eat anything that came out of the dirty cupboards. But she was not one to sit down with evils that could be cured, and no sooner had Nathan gone out to his employment on the first day, than she began to mend matters. A few shillings were not begrudged in the purchase of soap, soda, floorcloth, and brushes ; and first the long unwashed surface of the boards was scrubbed away, then the painting was washed, the carpets and cushions astonished with the dashing and beating they received, and every corner was so cleaned out, that the first hungry fly that made its appearance was obliged to depart again, for there was not a grain of dust for it to feast upon.

It was well for Magdalen that the landlady was no stranger to her, or she could not safely have ventured upon such active measures, but she was an old friend and fellow-servant of her mother's, a widow with a large young family ; and when Magdalen began by asking if she might clean up the rooms a bit, Mrs. Carter said she should be thankful, she was quite aware that they were not such as Anne Cooper's daughter could be comfortable in, but her Bobby's illness had made her unable to do anything scarcely for many weeks.

The first steps accomplished, which indeed took several days, for she always put things pretty straight again for the evenings, Magdalen laid out some more money in a clean cover for the sofa and a table-cloth ; she then arranged some small articles of furniture which they had brought with them, a few pictures, and their books, hung her canary in the window, and bought a bunch of country flowers, and then sat down contented. Of course, she took care to keep up the same prettiness and good order ; and often, when she returned from an expedition to some den so wretched, that she had to shake her clothes in the yard before she would venture up into the house, her own rooms looked so bright and comfortable that her heart glowed with thankfulness, and she rejoiced continually that she and Nathan had been able to make such a home. The next thing after what she called "settling herself," was to look out for regular employment ; and here again she found the blessing of her mother's character, for a housekeeper, under whom Anne had once lived, undertook to recommend her as a sempstress in some of the first families, and her skill in needle-work justifying the reputation, she soon found as much occupation as she desired. It was chiefly children's clothes she made, and many a pleasant hour was thus spent, whilst her mind was busy with useful and holy thoughts ; but it was not thus that all her time was passed, for Magdalen was not one who could be happy without finding some one besides herself to serve. To one who, for Christ's sake, desires to help the poor, there can be no lack of work in London. Her poor hardworked landlady had the first claim on her compassion. Very soon the sick child was brought upstairs for an hour at a time to be cheered and comforted, and

taken off his mother's hands, whilst the eldest girl, the servant and drudge of all the other lodgers, always knew where to find help when she was overpowered, and was oftenshown an easier and better way of getting through her slavish labours. Her acquaintance with them led her to find others; an accident, a child run over in her sight, brought her to a family in such poverty as she had never heard of at Adlington—poverty of both body and soul, a roof under which the sanctifying name of the Lord Jesus had never been spoken—and to these and others like them it was Magdalen's glory to bring the tidings of good things.

She very soon became known to the clergyman—an earnest, hard-working man—and he, recognizing her value, first invited her to help in his Sunday schools; but she would not leave Nathan on the only day he was at home: so Mr. Savile then employed her in other ways; and Magdalen, dressed in the plainest manner, her calm face expressing nothing but modesty and goodness, used to pass unmolested through streets of the worst character, bent upon her deeds of mercy.

And all this time Nathan was advancing just as she wished to see him. It was not all at once that he could fall into new habits, and he oftentimes felt wandering and unsettled; but the complete wrench from his old companions gave him every advantage, and then he had such a sweet, firm counsellor in Magdalen. He would not now have been tempted to turn off on his way home; for how could he have disappointed her, who, he felt quite sure, would be waiting tea for him, always bright and cheerful, and ready to welcome the dear brother? In winter he used to read aloud whilst she worked; in sum-

mer they walked to the parks, or out in some fresh neighbourhood, and at both seasons, occasionally, they went to one or other of the places of rational amusement, of which so many are to be found in the metropolis.

Nathan, always pleasant in his manners and appearance, now growing also steady and his faculties improved, became a favourite with his employers, and was fast rising above the subordinate position in which he commenced his town career.

Things were in this happy state, when one day Magdalen had occasion to carry some of her work home to the western part of Belgravia, and it happened that, as she was crossing Knightsbridge Road, she had some difficulty to escape from a showy dog-cart which was being driven at full speed along the road. The driver of the vehicle pulled up just as she had cleared it, and, looking round, she met the black, piercing eyes of Robert Andas. At once he took off his hat, and made her a grand sweeping bow. She flushed crimson, but only said quietly, "How-d'ye-do, Mr. Andas?" and passed on her way.

She was bound for a house not far off, where a lady lived for whom she had worked ever since she came to London. They were all fond of their pretty, grave sempstress, and made much of her. She was taken into the nursery, where she played with the little golden-haired children, and had some tea to refresh her after her long walk; and presently the lady came in dressed gaily for her drive in the park, and she talked to Magdalen, and made her the channel of her bounty to some destitute creatures Magdalen had told her of; but all the time here, and when she was walking back again, she was thinking of that flashily-dressed figure, with the cigar in

his mouth, and the old bad leer in his eye, and a mis-giving of evil was heavy upon her.

It was no surprise when, only a few days afterwards, Nathan said to her, "Who do you think I met to-day?"

"Robert Andas," answered Magdalen, without any hesitation.

"Why you are a witch, Magdy," said her brother. "What made you think of him?"

"I saw him in crossing the Knightsbridge Road on Monday," replied Magdalen.

"You did!" exclaimed her brother. "It was very close of you to keep it, Magdy."

"It was," said she. "You have a right to scold me, Nathan; but I was not glad to see him, and I wanted to forget it."

"Well, I can't say that I was glad exactly; but, after all, it was an old face, and that is pleasant in this 'howling wilderness;' but I had not a minute hardly to stay, so very few words passed between us."

The fewer the better thought the poor suspicious sister, but she only asked, "What is he doing in London? Do you know?"

"I couldn't quite make out, though I asked him; but he seems very prosperous. I couldn't help, of course, telling him where we were; but I didn't invite him to give us a call, for I thought you might not like it."

"Thank you, Nathan, dear, it was much better not," said Magdalen, with gratitude; and after a few more speculations, the talk about him ended.

A week after this, Nathan came in looking as if he had something on his mind, he was unsettled and absent; at last the reason came out.

"I've seen Bob again, Magdy. Such a swell he seems to be. Makes five hundred a year, he says, by some agency. He was very friendly, and he said something about wanting old times to be forgotten in one way and not in another; quite nicely he said it, and I'm sure, Magdy, after Mr. Savile's sermon last Sunday, we ought not to bear malice against anybody."

"I hope we don't wish him ill," said Magdalen; "but still it cannot be wise to be intimate with him again. I should think the best way would be to pass him fair, but to be rather cool and reserved with him."

"That may do for you, Magdy, that have so much pluck," said Nathan, rather hotly; "but it isn't so easy for a man to cut another short that tries to be friendly with him."

"I am sure you could do it, Nathan, if you thought it right," said Magdalen.

"But I don't see it quite as you do," answered Nathan.

"I think it is in this way, Nathan," said Magdy, laying down her thimble as if she should not need it soon again. "We never knew any real good in Robert Andas; not good reasons for what he did, I mean. You know the bad things he followed better than I do, and as he scorned religion, we could not look for anything else in him; so that it seems to me, it would be going into temptation to be friendly with him again; and unless he be much changed, it would be seeking fellowship with an unbeliever."

"That is all very true," said Nathan; "but people might stop knowing any one almost, and particularly in London, where you know so little of the people you have to walk beside, if they waited till they knew whether he

was a religious man or not. And there are few to be found so strict as you would have them, Magdy."

"Oh, Nathan, don't call me strict. It sounds as if I judged people and set myself up; perhaps, I do a little," added Magdalen, rather sadly.

"Nonsense, I didn't mean that," said Nathan, affectionately.

"But," continued Magdalen, "it is very difficult to read of perfect goodness in the Bible, and then to go out into the world in a great place like this, and hear of tradesmen cheating to outreach their neighbours, servants lying and pilfering, great ladies rolling to church in their carriages, whom I know are regardless of their godless households, not to speak of the drunkenness and sins that make me tremble when I hear of them; it is difficult then not to be very strict, as you call it, in thinking of it all. At the same time I know that there are excuses to be made for many, perhaps for all of them. Many have not been taught better, many in this city are like heathens in a foreign land. And there are some, too, who may be panting like the hart for the cooling stream in the midst of their wickedness, and, perhaps, just when we are judging them, they may be about to listen to the voice of the charmer, and repent and forsake their sins. But still these bad things are sins, and I think we should keep far off them when we know better, and not put ourselves in the way of such as Robert Andas."

"He may be different now," said Nathan, in a timid tone.

"He may be," answered Magdalen, and after that they both kept silent, until Nathan broke out with—

"I hardly like to tell you, after you have spoken out

so about him, but he wants to treat you and me to the Crystal Palace or somewhere. He says if I can get a holiday, he doesn't care where it is to, but just for old times. He wanted it to be Sunday ; but I stood out there, and he gave way directly, which was nice of him, so I said I would ask you."

"Please say no," said Magdalen, decidedly. "It would be no pleasure to us, and I don't think it would be right."

"We needn't have much to do with him afterwards, and you have so few holidays, Magdy."

"It would be no holiday to me," said Magdalen ; "as anxious as I should be. I'd rather go with you alone some day, Nathan, or we might ask your companion Hardy, and his sister Ellen ; you know they really never get anywhere. Don't you think between us we might contrive to treat them to some place ? Mrs. Lascelles paid me so well for those tucked, white frocks, that I am quite rich now."

Nathan was taken with the idea. This Hardy was in the same house with Nathan, a steady, well brought up young man. He had recently taken his orphan sister to live with him. She had been with a dressmaker in the West End, and nearly killed with hard work, until her brother insisted upon her coming to share his salary, and rest a while. She was a fair, delicate, yielding girl, and had taken a great fancy to Magdalen, and promised to be a nice friend for her. So this new plan was pleasant to both of them, and, talking of it, they laid Robert Andas and his schemes aside.

Not for long, unfortunately. One day, soon afterwards, Nathan came in and said, "After all, Magdy, I couldn't

quite get rid of Bob, so I am going with him and two or three more down the river to-morrow."

"Are you?" said Magdalen, with a sinking heart.

"Yes, he stands treat, and he does it all in such a friendly way, though he was quite put out that you refused to join us, that I couldn't say no."

There was such a tone of apology in Nathan's speaking, that his sister felt ashamed, as if she had taken too much upon herself, and she made no remark to prolong the subject; but all that evening, and more so next day, when she saw Nathan dressed in his best, and in his highest spirits, set out to join the party, her mind was filled with forebodings of what it might bring forth.

Would it have been better had she just gone with them for this once, without making such a fuss about the matter? Perhaps then it might have gone no further, now there was no knowing what Nathan might be drawn into, and a vision of his utter ruin haunted her. Then she reproached herself for her faithlessness and self-conceit, in thinking that her being with them would only have been a safeguard, and in this tumult of conflicting fears, Magdalen was more disturbed than she had been for years.

Happily there was help nigh at hand. It was a Saint's-day; the bell of the neighbouring church began to toll for morning service. She rose at its call, laid aside her work, and, taking the invalid son of her landlady, who was always her willing companion, she joined the band of worshippers, and there, seeking those things which are above, how small and short appeared the earthly care in which she had been grovelling. Now at last, she was able to lay her anxiety down in prayer,

and, as it were, find rest in the tabernacle on God's holy hill.

Nathan's last words were, "I shall be back early," so she prepared supper, and had everything bright and ready for him in good time, and then sat down to wait, trying to hope that he would come almost directly. Nine, ten, eleven, struck, however, and he had not come. "It was not likely he could get away soon," said she to herself. "He could not break them up. They would want to make what I know Andas would call 'a day of it,' and that would be sure to mean a night too."

When midnight drew on, Mrs. Carter came to offer to sit up with her, or take her place, but Magdalen only said,—

"Oh, no, Mrs. Carter, it is very kind of you; but my brother is likely to be detained late, and I am not sorry to be able to finish this little dress. Look, is it not going to be pretty?"

"Ah, my dear," said the widow, who was, by habit, one of the most melancholy beings, "you will wear your eyesight out with that fine work, and there is nothing can make up for your eyes. It is thoughtless of your brother, Miss Cooper, very; though I know he is as pleasant-spoken a lodger as any one need wish to have; but men are all alike, my dear, as I have often thought since I lost my poor dear James, who was just the same thoughtless as your brother, and here we are left now, me and my poor children;" and then Magdalen had to turn comforter, and to send the faint-hearted widow a little cheered to bed. She had plenty of time afterwards to finish the little frock, though she had not spirit left to admire her work, for the morning was dawning, and

Nathan had not come. Her task finished, it was more difficult than ever to still her natural fears. Alone and wearied, what earthly thoughts could comfort her? None, but she looked beyond them, and never before, perhaps, as now, had she felt the exceeding power of strength from heaven to support the fainting soul. She could pray calmly, but earnestly, for Nathan, and not only for him, but at this time, when she was trying to cast aside all earthly dross, she prayed also for Robert Andas, until at last, soothed as well as wearied, sleep overpowered her; and it was in the midst of a strange, confused dream, that the ring at the door-bell aroused her, and, starting up, although she staggered at first with dizziness and the heaviness of sleep, she hastened down to answer it.

There was no need of candle, for it was broad daylight, though still so early, that even the hardworked daughter had not yet arisen, and the air was cold and chill. Magdalen shivered as she opened the door. Before she had time to look at him, Nathan stooped down and kissed her. Something in his way of doing it surprised her, and his silence, too, so she did not speak either, but as he closed the door, she led the way upstairs. During her short sleep, the fire had burnt hollow, but well piled up, the first touch of the poker provoked a blaze; and as Nathan came in, he might well have been struck with the comfort of the room; the little table still neatly laid for supper, and no untidiness. He did not appear, however, to notice anything, but sat down at once, and spread his fingers to the blaze. Then Magdalen noticed how very pale he was.

"It is cold, Nathan, is it not?" she said. "I'll make you a cup of coffee."

"Well," he answered, "it 'll do us both good. You shouldn't have sat up for me, old woman."

"But you had no latch-key, you know," said Magdalen, smiling, her fears quite removed by his soberness and his very kind ways, and yet she shivered; "and I was not sorry," she added, "to sit up later than usual, to finish Mrs. Lascelles' work. Not that I am a good watcher. I think I was asleep when your ring aroused me."

Nathan wasn't listening to her now; he was looking into the fire, and Magdalen, seeing he was not inclined to talk, moved about her preparations. The coffee was soon made, and the table pushed towards the fire. Nathan drank off a cup almost at a draught, and then gave a deep sigh, as if refreshed.

"You were thirsty, Nathan," said Magdalen.

He looked up at her strangely instead of answering; at last, as if he must speak, he said, "Something happened to-night, last night, I mean, made me so late."

"An accident?" said Magdalen. "Was it the railway?"

"No, not the railway. The steamboat. Getting out of the steamboat. Robert Andas. He's dead."

"Oh, Nathan," cried Magdalen, starting up, and taking hold of his hand, which was as cold as her own. "Oh, Nathan, dead!"

"Yes, Magdy," replied Nathan, putting his other hand over his eyes, as if to shut something out, till, rousing himself, he got up, and putting her in his place, for she was pale and stunned, and hardly able to stand, he continued, "yes, Magdy, I had better tell you all about it at once. We went to Greenwich, and we had what they called 'a real jolly day,' but I will tell you, Magdy, all the

time I was saying it should be the last of that sort for me. I have lived too long in your ways, now, to stand easy amidst such wickedness as I heard of yesterday. We had dinner, and came back, I tell it short ; we were getting out of the steamer when Bob missed his footing and fell, never mind how. He lived a few hours after. I can't tell you about it," continued the poor lad, walking up and down the room ; "but, oh, I thank God, I thank God, for you, Magdy, and for the knowledge He has brought me to ; I will never forget it, God helping me, I think I never shall, only if we might pray for the dead, Magdy," and he stopped with a piteous look before her.

"I did pray for him in the night. God's mercy is infinite. Let us trust in Him," said Magdalen, with an expression of almost joyfulness on her face, as she heard the manliness and yet the humility of her brother's words. "We do not know how it may be. Shall we say our morning prayers, Nathan, and we will think of him ?"

They knelt together in the cold morning light, the brother and sister, and as Nathan, saying aloud, where he had always only silently joined before, read the prayers, horror, doubt, and misery vanished, and a degree of hope and peace shone over them, which the memory of the past, sad and solemn as it was, could not take away.

Nearly fifty years have passed since then ; let us once more climb the hill at Adlington, and direct our steps towards the house by itself that is sheltered by the elm-tree. The forge is gone, and in its place a handsome addition to the old substantial cottage, and some ground, enclosed

as a garden, is now full of flowers. Some bright little children are playing there, the eldest girl, if you ask her name will say, "Magdalen Cooper." Has time gone back instead of forward, then? No; these are Nathan's grandchildren, come down from London for a holiday, and Nathan himself is walking with his son across the field. His wife, who was once Ellen Hardy, has been laid in the churchyard, but he is not alone. For here, to comfort him in this trouble, too, is Magdalen, old Magdalen. See, in that parlour, where every object shows that prosperity as well as peace is reigning there, she sits knitting by the fire. Flowers are in the window-seat, a bird is singing over them; it is meet that cheerful things should be round her, sweet, peaceful, old Magdalen.

She sought first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all other things have been added unto her.

Bernard Ellis.

"Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy."

"From His pard'ning Cross He calls,
Oh, spare as I have spared."—KEBLE.

ROBERT ELLIS was a hard man. You might have gone round and round his little world at Wilverton, and all would have told you the same thing. You need not, however, go so far; a glance into his own household would be sufficient. There you would see good order, and many signs of prosperity, but beyond cleanliness, few comforts. His wife was a thin, pale, meek woman, with light gray eyes that seemed to ask pardon for looking at you: about all his children there was a dogged still air that declared their good behaviour to be the result of severe training.

Robert Ellis was a grocer. He carried on his business in a small thriving town in Buckinghamshire. There were not many "quality" in Wilverton, but a great deal of money was being turned over there, of which Ellis intended to have his share. Already Robert had not done badly, considering that, born the son of a well-to-do farmer, who wasted all his patrimony—he had begun life as a charity apprentice. When he set up for himself it was in the smallest way, a sort of "odds and ends" shop—

herrings, candles, twine, and soap ; but year by year his style of business improved, and in spite of the wants of his family, he had always been beforehand, and had been able even to fulfil in part his cherished ambition by buying a few acres of land—first, garden ground reclaimed from the high road, then the field adjoining, and thus lay once more the foundation of his family's prosperity. No one would have believed that the shabby-looking Robert Ellis, who kept the all-sorts shop in Silver Street, could have such romantic dreams ; but from the time that his eldest son, Bernard, was born, he determined to give him the best education he could and fit him for managing the farm that he intended to be his inheritance. But as no one could have guessed it, to no one did he impart his plans, and least of all to Bernard. He perhaps, beyond the other children, was the recipient of his father's harshness. "Learn to make yourself useful,"—spoken in a tone not to encourage, but make him believe that he was a burden on his father's hands—was the way in which he was set to any piece of work ; whilst every penny that was spent on his books or schooling was grudged or thrown up at him, as if education was the last thing Robert designed for this son, on whom in reality he intended to spare nothing. It was unfortunate for his contentment that Bernard was gifted with a sensitive mind, strong feelings, and an independent spirit—that he was generous and devoted to his mother, that he was fond of books, and that his attendance at the grammar school at Wilverton brought him in contact with boys of superior station to his own. For Bernard, though far from being irreverent or thoughtless, had not the religious principle as yet, which would have enabled him to improve

what was in his power and endure patiently what was not. His mother had taught him some things as a little boy, and he was sent to church regularly, for it was respectable ; but the blessed power of Christ's Holy Religion was unknown to him, and daily and hourly was he fretted by meanness, harshness, and tyranny. There was affection enough in the family to satisfy even him, if he had known it, but it was not the fashion in that household to make any demonstration. All pleasant, loving words were checked, and the constant interchange of kindly deeds which help to smooth the Christian's daily life, both in the giving and receiving, were almost unknown to them. There were no other boys. Mary was three years younger, too young to be a companion, and then came Anne, and Jane, and Elizabeth ; the last a tiny girl, too small for her heavy name, only no one dared to shorten it to Bess or Lizzie for fear of the father calling it "such foolery." And for sixteen years Robert had toiled on without help or counsel, laying by and prospering. Bernard was nearly fifteen, and tall for his age. To every one's surprise he was still at school, and whilst his father, with an apron on, was weighing small parcels of sugar or standing before a sieve of currants, Bernard was turning out with his books under his arm, with the exception of his coarse ill-shaped clothes, like any gentleman. The only time when Ellis allowed himself any holiday, was when he had occasion to go up to London on business, and that was only for a day ; when indeed, except for the change of scene, it was little relaxation, for he was only going round from one grocer's to another—if he had an hour or two to spare—observing improvements, asking prices, and trying to gain information for his future profit. During these

journeys Mrs. Ellis attended entirely to the shop—for Mary and her two next sisters were at school—and very fidgety was the pale meek woman lest anything should perchance go wrong. Here was another instance of the way in which Robert belied himself for want of an amiable manner. He had married Jane Woodward, a nursery maid at Wilverton, not for profit, nor convenience, nor for anything but that he loved her; and though his affection was fully returned he had so early begun to be stern with her, harsh to her little failings and sour when she looked lovingly at him, that Jane was crushed by the belief that, besides being the useless being he often called her, she was not dear to him. One morning the family were up even before their usual hour, for the father was going off to London, and as he always saved the omnibus fare by walking to the station, he had to be off betimes. The mother was in the shop receiving her minute directions; so Mary was making breakfast ready, with Anne, then about ten years old, to help her.

Mary was a stirring girl and liked nothing better than to be useful. Anne was like her mother, and besides was delicate. She was now, however, helping Mary, and rather pleased than otherwise with the office, though her face was toasted as much as the bread she had been holding, and her hand was a little scalded with the steam of the tea-kettle. Anne was well known to be unhandy in most things she did, and for that reason, rather foolishly, Mary and her mother seldom let her do anything for fear of a misfortune. This morning, however, she was busy, and all was nearly ready when suddenly the father put his head through the door that led from the shop into a narrow dark passage to the kitchen and said, "Now then,

isn't that breakfast ready?" At this moment Anne was carrying a jug of skim-milk from the pantry into the kitchen, and the sound of her father's voice so startled her, that, more awkward even than usual from her scalded hand, she let the jug fall, and then stood stock still, frightened to death, with the pieces at her feet, and the spilt milk round her. Her father's scolding did not move her, nor the box on the ear, which was his first recompense; but it was Anne's way to become the more still, the more she was feeling, so her sisters were not surprised; she only stirred when her father bade her, and that was to pick up the pieces, wipe up the milk, and then come and watch them eat their breakfast, for not one bit should she have herself, nor dinner either perhaps; he would see about it.

It was far from the mother's habit to interfere, but this time she did say, "Robert, let her have a piece of bread; she turns sick if she goes long without."

"And it was her scalded hand, father," said Mary, a little more boldly. "She hurt it badly with the steam."

"All the more reason why she should learn to take care. She'll not scald herself next time, if she is made to remember this," said the father, in the quiet hard voice from which they knew there was no appeal. So Anne stood beside him till he had finished, without a tear moistening her sallow cheek, or a sign of feeling about her stolid face. It would seem as if she was quite as hard as her father, but it was not so. They did not show feeling in that family. The mother was only too glad that her husband went away without any more prohibitions about the dinner, but she showed no tenderness except by saying quietly, "Mary, get off to school. It'll

tire Anne less, walking slowly," and when the little girl came back at noon, without a complaint, but evidently with scarcely strength enough to drag her limbs along, she had a basin of broth waiting for her ; and then Anne did more than any of the other children would have done, she kissed her mother, but there was no one near to see, and Anne had always been rather different from the rest.

The young ones were all in bed before Robert Ellis got home that night. The first thing he said was,—
"Where is Bernard ?"

"He walked over to Burton's farm with some sugar they wanted for preserving," said the mother. "It was to go directly, so he set off with it about seven o'clock. A heavy load it was, but I wonder he has not got back again."

"High time," said Ellis, sitting down to eat his supper. "He's a fine dawdler. Will never earn salt to his bread, I expect."

"We've been very busy," said the mother, seizing the opportunity of her husband's filling his mouth with a piece of hard cheese, to try and divert his attention away from Bernard. "Heaps of people have been in for small articles, and they've got twelve pounds of dips up to Liddell's ; and Burtons never came for anything before ; they're the new people, you know ; perhaps they may be customers."

"And perhaps they won't pay," said Ellis, with his mouth full.

"Nancy Walker said they were very well off," continued Jane ; "the father's retired, lives at Edmonton. I have been standing at the counter all the day, and

Bernard's been setting down and weighing ever since he came from school. He's had no time for his tasks at all."

"Then he ought to have had," said the father, turning sharply round upon her. "Do I send him to school, to learn to tie up sugar? I'll not have him wasting his time doing what any dolt could do."

"Well, I'm sure I didn't know," said Jane, apologetically. "There was this sugar to send off, you know, and Mary helped too, but me and her couldn't have done it by ourselves, and the other things as well, for people were coming in till eight o'clock and more."

"I'll not have it, and that's enough," said the lord and master, and then he fell into a reverie, which Jane knew better than to disturb; although she did not know that it was upon the desirability of keeping an apprentice he was cogitating, so that his son might not again be called from the studies which his father intended should be the stepping-stone of the family greatness.

Whilst Robert sat thus thinking, did he never hear, in fancy, a trembling voice asking him for help, nor see a pair of imploring eyes raised to his? Very likely not, for the habit of selfishness forms a shell round the heart, which only the crack of some extraordinary event can open.

Happily there were other ears as yet unstopped to the cry of misery. About ten minutes after his father had passed along the road from the station to Wilverton, Bernard also came that way, walking quickly, warm though it was, for he had been detained at the farm, and he had more than one reason for wishing to get home.

"What a piece of waste ground as yet unenclosed,"





Bernard discovers Edward Foster in the ditch.—P. 229.

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thought Robert Ellis, begrudgingly ; " of no use but to maintain the donkeys of dishonest ragmen ; and those great beeches that overhang the ground, of what use are they but to stop the growth beneath them ? "

" ' *Silvestrem tenui sub tegmine fagi*, ' " &c.,

said Bernard to himself, recalling with pleasure the Latin poetry he had been doing that afternoon, and at that point both father and son were interrupted by the same sound, but the one with a mutter of " idle vagabond," went on his way : the other stayed to listen.

" Will you help me, please ? Oh, please help me ! "

Bernard was rather startled, for the voice, full of pain, seemed actually to come out of the beech-tree he had been saying verses to, but a second glance showed him a pale face just appearing above the side of the ditch, and a thin hand held out in entreaty. Both voice and hand belonged to a boy of about thirteen years of age, who was lying there in a most awkward position, from which he did not appear to be able to extricate himself.

" What is the matter ? " asked Bernard. " Can't you get out ? "

" No," replied the lad, in feeble accents. " I have fallen down. I was tired, and I was cutting myself a stick, when I fell. It is so bad. Oh, mother ! "

There was a miserable despairing tone in the last words that went to the bottom of Bernard's heart. " Where is your mother ? " said he.

" Dead," replied the boy, pointing upwards, and shaking his head ; then gasping for breath, and making an effort, he said,—" I was going to Uxbridge. I have an uncle. He's all I have ; but I can't get there now," and here

he could bear no more—perhaps with the assurance that he had found a friend in the owner of the pitying face that was bending over him, he gave way and fainted. Bernard was alarmed. He stepped down into the ditch to look for water, but it was dried up. He looked back towards Burton's farm, but it was far out of sight; the town was nearer, so first contriving with some difficulty to raise the lad out of the ditch, and lay him flat upon the turf above, he set off at a most rapid pace to obtain assistance.

The first place he came to was a cottage not far from the entrance to the town. There he found only an old woman and her daughter, but the younger one, on hearing his tale, said that she would take some water to the lad, and advised Bernard to turn off towards a house within two fields, where he was sure to obtain help.

A Mr. Armstrong lived there, whose son was at the grammar-school: so Bernard, going to the back-door, asked first for him, but all the family were out, and the old man-servant looked rather doubtful when he heard Bernard's story. Before he had refused help, however, it turned up from another direction; the gardener appeared, driving a tax-cart from the town, and as soon as he saw the puzzled look on old Ben's face, and the reason of it, he cried, "All right, we can but go and see what we can do. Jump up, sir," and turning his horse quickly round again, he had driven Bernard to the beech-trees, before the good-natured woman had done more than walk to the spot, raise the poor lad's head upon her lap, and bathe his face with water.

"It's a bad job, I fear," said the gardener, looking at *him*; "we'd best take him to the Union at once. I'm

sure master won't mind my going round that way with the cart. He's chairman of the Board himself."

"Our house would be nearer," said Bernard. "I wish I could take him there."

"Just as you please, sir," said the gardener, who judged from his way of speaking that Bernard was of "a betterly sort," as he would have expressed it. "But there's not many would like to take him in, and he'll be well off at the Union; they say they're prodigious kind to the sick, and you see he seems an unknown sort of person. Is he coming round a bit, Ellen?"

He only came round to groan and sink again, but it showed that there was life in him yet; and so, with better hopes, the gardener and Bernard lifted him into the back of the cart, with as much care as they could, and the woman declining a lift back again, they went at a sober pace to Wilverton.

It was enough to make the street boys, of whom Wilverton boasted an unusual number, stand and stare, to see Bernard Ellis, who was well known by sight to most of them, sitting in the back of Mr. Armstrong's tax-cart, holding an apparently dead boy in his arms. The workhouse was quite at the other end of the town, so they had to drive through the principal streets. There was no delay in admitting them. The matron was fortunately a kind-hearted and active person, and the boy had every attention paid him, as soon as possible. Bernard accompanied him to the hospital, and stayed with him until the arrival of the surgeon, who pronounced the injury to be a bad fracture of the thigh, and the condition of the boy, owing to his feeble state, to be decidedly precarious. The setting was a most painful business, but the poor lad

bore it with great fortitude, holding tight by Bernard's hand, who remained beside him all the time, and only left the house when the surgeon said there was nothing more to be done, but to keep him as quiet as possible ; then he remembered, almost for the first time, his own home, and his father's probable anger at his being out so late, and it was with some natural qualms of fear that he approached the side door, in a cross street, by which, after shop hours, their house was entered.

The parlour window, a small bow, just round the corner, overlooked this entrance, and here it would seem that his mother had been watching, for as soon as ever his hand was on the latch, the door was opened from within, and she said,—“Come in, Bernard, get your supper, and say nothing till you've finished. Father's busy with his accounts in the shop, and you'd best slip off to bed before he sees you.”

This in an undertone was quite enough to make Bernard put his shoes off, step in softly, and without a word sit down to the frugal meal set out for him.

“You've not been after any mischief?” said his mother, as he was eating his supper silently.

“No, mother,” answered Bernard, in the same low tone, and she asked no more. They were sparing of their words in that house.

A very few minutes sufficed for his repast, and he was just going noiselessly up to bed, when the shop-door into the passage opened, and his father came out.

“Oh, you've come in at last,” said he ; “and where have you been?”

“I went with some sugar to Burton's farm. Mrs. Burton stopped me till her husband came in, that she

might give me the money for it," here Bernard pointed to some shillings which he had laid upon the table, "and as I came back I found a poor lad lying in the ditch with his thigh broken ; Mr. Armstrong's gardener drove him to the workhouse, and I have been helping them to set the bone, which was badly fractured."

"Running after vagabonds, and doing the work of parish overseers ; the end will be, that you will be in the Union yourself. It is little use my slaving to keep you at a good school, if you seek such company, and waste your time when you should be doing your lessons. I suppose you have not learnt them for to-morrow yet ?"

"I intend to get up early in the morning, and do them before school," said Bernard.

"Little enough you'll know of them, I'll warrant, then," said his father, with a contemptuous laugh ; "however, I hope you'll get a flogging, as you deserve, and now be off to bed with you."

The first part of his father's prophecy was fulfilled, in so far that a hasty morning's work before breakfast proved a very poor substitute for his usual hours, and his lessons were imperfectly prepared ; but his master was far too just to resort to extreme measures in punishing the rare remissness of the steadiest boy in the whole school. He had, nevertheless, a task which kept him all the noon at work, and it was not until after tea that he had an opportunity of doing what he had been thinking about continually, to run up to the Union, and inquire after the sick boy.

Bernard had little difficulty in gaining admission to the ward in which the poor lad had been placed, and in which, indeed, he was at present the sole occupant, for

besides that he was recognized as the one who had brought in and helped the case, his father was well known to both the matron and the master, and they were not ill-disposed to see his son.

Although Bernard had left the boy in the same state the night before, it seemed quite a new shock to him to enter that darkened room, and to see the poor suffering face on the coarse pillow, and to contrast the painful constrained position with his own free healthy limbs. But it was pleasant to see the expression change, and a little smile come over the sick boy's countenance, as Bernard came up close to him, and asked him how he felt.

"Very bad," he answered, in a feeble voice; "very bad; but I thought perhaps I should not see you any more."

"Oh, I was sure to come and see you, when I helped to bring you here," said Bernard, thinking how loud his own voice sounded.

"Yes, I suppose so," said the boy; "I might have known that, but I wanted to thank you. I should have died in the ditch, if it had not been for you. I wish mother was here to thank you," and with this the boy's eyes overflowed with tears.

"Never mind," said Bernard, putting a hand on his with an awkward attempt at consolation. "Of course when I saw you wanted help, I could not but bring it to you."

"Everybody wouldn't have done it," said the boy. "There was one man. I called to him, and he saw me, but he only said something like a curse, and went on. I *could* wish that his curse might come home to roost, only

I know I oughtn't. I've been trying to forgive that man all day. It's very wrong of me to think of it."

"He's a wretch, whoever he is," said Bernard, warmly; "but never mind him. The matron said I was to be sure and keep you quiet, and that is not the way. I should like to know your name. It is so strange not to know what to call you."

"I'm Edward christened, Edward Fewster," said the boy; "Ned always called by—but I've nobody belonging to me now, but an uncle at Uxbridge, and I've never seen him. I had his name written down in my waistcoat pocket, but the matron's got it; she's going to write to him. Mother would never let him know how badly off we were, 'cause he was in a good way as a butcher, father's brother he was, and she did not want to pull him down like with poor relations; so we went on parting with things and starving till she died."

Again showered down the tears, whilst the poor hands clutched the bed-clothes, and Bernard felt helpless to soothe such grief as he had never seen before.

"There had only been me and her for years, that's why," sobbed the poor fellow, as if to excuse himself, and then, with a great effort, he checked his grief; but by this time, the pain of his injured limb had become excessive, and Bernard was glad to see the matron come back into the room, and to give up his place to her.

"Good bye, Ned," said he, as he was going away, scarcely expecting the poor lad to take any notice, in the midst of his sufferings.

But he did, and seizing Bernard's hand, he gasped,—
"Would you mind coming again?"

"I'll come," said Bernard.

"Soon?" urged the boy.

"To-morrow," said Bernard decidedly, and so they parted.

Bernard thought it great ill-luck that in their own street he should encounter his father, and it was no surprise to be saluted by the natural question, only with an emphasis on the "you" that implied especial suspicion of his movements,—“And where have you been?”

"I only went up to the Union to see how that poor lad was," said Bernard. "They thought he would have died, and he is not yet out of danger with the fever."

"A good riddance for the parish," said his father. "We don't want the rates charged with his maintenance. And what you have to do with such a one, I cannot tell. However, let it be done with now. If not, I'll see about t."

Now it happened that Ellis was in a great hurry; he was going to a vestry meeting, an assembly in which his shrewd suggestions were often received with great respect: so he was in a pretty good humour, or it might have been worse for Bernard. He, thinking that he had escaped finely, proceeded home, where he lost not a moment in plunging into his lessons, and his father's implied desire that he should go no more to the Union never entered his thoughts again.

So the next day found him once more at Ned's bedside, and, although the poor lad was so weak and ill that he could bear no conversation, the sight of Bernard was evidently such a pleasure to him that the matron urged him to repeat his visits; and for several days he never missed turning his steps towards the Union whenever he *had an opportunity*. He did not go always empty-handed

either, for he had ventured to tell his mother, and her soft heart moved by hearing of such pain and desolation, she sent the sufferer some soft linen, and some cooling food that she rightly judged would be a comfort to him. Every time before Bernard left, there was the same wistful look, and the same piteous asking him to promise to come again—the one lightening of his dreary day Bernard's visit seemed to be ; no wonder that, with Bernard's disposition, he made every effort to give him this consolation. The master of the workhouse had written to the uncle at Uxbridge, but, in return, he only received the intelligence that Mr. Fewster had been dead some months, and his widow and her family had moved into the north, where it would be little use sending to her for relief on behalf of a poor and distant relative, whom she had never seen. It was nearly a fortnight from the time when Ned Fewster had been first laid up. Mr. Ellis had been particularly engaged with his business, and the short periods during which his family saw him were chiefly occupied in talking to his wife about the affairs in which she was to help him ; so Bernard thought he was pretty safe, and it was a great surprise when, as he was one evening turning out of the workhouse at a later hour than usual, he saw his father walking up and down on the gravelled path in front. He turned back as soon as his son came up with him, and they proceeded together towards the town.

“ You thought, perhaps, I didn't know what you were doing, but I did,” commenced the father. “ I have been busy, I have been slaving to keep things together, to provide food and clothing for your mother and you, but I have had an eye on your movements also ; and I tell you, once for all, that I will not have you running after

this tramp. I found your mother cutting up a good shirt of mine for him only this afternoon—you are all gone mad, I think. Charity, indeed! Let your charity begin at home—earn your own living, and then give to others. Do you know who your father was?”—here Ellis’s voice softened a little for a moment—“You know that he lived at Elsham Grange? Ellis of Elsham, looked up to by all round. There are gravestones in Elsham Churchyard for a hundred years and more; and, whilst I am trying to bring you up to what he mightn’t have been ashamed to see you, you are foiling me at all points: but I can tell you this, that if you don’t try to amend your ways, you shall go about your business. I’ll give you neither houseroom nor anything else; and if I ever hear of your hounding with this vagrant again, I’ll horse-whip you. So you know.”

Mr. Ellis then paused; and Bernard, angry, frightened, and puzzled, held his peace—and they walked in silence through the town. At last he could bear it no longer; the thought of Ned, desolate, pining for him, fretting and suffering without a single friend in the world, was too much, and he said,—

“I must go and see the poor boy once again, father; he is quite friendless, and from my helping him that night, he looks to me entirely. He is no common tramp, his father seems to have been a decent man; Fewster of Uxbridge, a butcher, was his uncle. Mr. Corby wrote to him, but he is dead: so Ned, this boy, is fairly on the parish; and if he could have been moved, he would have been passed back to where his father lived, but he is far too ill. It is doubtful whether he can ever recover, and he must be lame, at all events, for some time

to come. I have promised to go and see him to-morrow. You'll not say 'no' to that once, father?"

There was, in these words, a tone with which Bernard had never before spoken to his father—a manly independence, a freedom, and yet a desire to do what his father wished; but, unhappily, in his present mood, Ellis did not take it well, and instead of being mollified, he was enraged that Bernard should presume to answer him.

"I have told you my desire in the matter," said he, "you shall not go again, so hold your tongue about it for the future."

Then all Bernard's moderation vanished, and his breast was filled with unreasonable indignation.

In his own mind he accused his father of tyranny, cruelty, and injustice, and it was only his habitual respect and fear that restrained him from bursting forth into rebellious words. Happily there was not much time for it as they were very near their own house, and once inside, Bernard rushed up to his own little attic room, where he always went to do his lessons. On the way, he nearly tumbled over his little sister Anne, who was on her knees searching for something, as it seemed.

"Hollo, Anne," said Bernard; "what are you doing there?"

"Open me the window, will you, Bernard? I cannot reach it," said she, getting up with something in her hand. "It's a bee crawling here; it seems as if it could not fly, and I thought it would be stepped upon."

"Lucky for it, if it were," muttered Bernard, with wild bitterness; nevertheless, he not only opened the window, but he lifted up the little girl that she might put the creature carefully out.

"Look, Bernard, what I am doing," said she, as soon as he had set her down again; "I heard father scolding about the scales having got so sticky and dirty, so I have got the things, and I am making them quite bright. Mother does not know, only Mary. I thought I would do them up here to be out of the way."

"Little thanks you will get for it," said Bernard. "Have them thrown at your head, most likely;" and he passed on to his own little room to learn his lessons as best he could, which was not very hopeful, considering that his mind was given up to angry feelings.

All that night he was the same, and next morning too, although his father's manner to him was much as usual. At school his downcast face was noticed; but his master, with whom he was a great favourite, was only very forbearing with him when he construed "puer" pauper, and some other words in an equally abstracted way, but he resolved that next day, which was a half-holiday, he would try to have some talk with his absent pupil, and see if he could not give him help or counsel.

As soon as Bernard had had his tea in the evening, instead of turning out, as he generally did, immediately, he went at once to his lessons—not with a view of either deceiving his father or obeying him, but simply with a sort of wish to do his duty before proceeding to that one sin, upon which he was determined.

He hurried over them, however, and just before eight he went out, rather fearing that at so late an hour he might not be able to gain admittance to the hospital. He had a sufficient friend, however, in the matron, Mrs. Corby, and he was admitted to the ward, where he found Ned better, but in a great state of uneasiness at his own

non-appearance at the usual hour. By this time the two lads had become great friends, and had held some nice conversations whenever Ned was well enough to bear it. He had told Bernard much about himself. His mother had been a good woman, a nurse in some nice families before she married the man whom intemperance had ruined. In the midst of her consequent struggle for their daily bread for the body, she had never ceased to strive to impart better things to her son, and to teach him that in his mind and soul he had nobler parts which would last when the body was decayed. So when this poor boy was laid in a pauper hospital, without a known relation in the world, he was not so destitute as some rich men, who are in possession of many goods that will perish, and know nothing about eternal treasures. After the boys had talked a little about Ned's improvement, and what the doctor said, and what the kind matron had brought him, and the other little things that form a variety in a sick person's life, then he said,—

"I thought you were not coming to-night, and that set me on thinking how I should do without you. I thought, perhaps, your friends might have stopped your coming. It is very good of you not to mind me being in the Union."

"Well, that is not your fault, however," said Bernard ; "and as to my being good to come, I like it ; and as to friends stopping me, friends, as you call them, have tried, and they can't do it. I am not going to see a poor fellow lie here, without a soul to speak too, and be such a brute as to forsake him, no, not if I were killed for it ; and if my father thinks he's going to make me that sort of fellow, he's mistaken, for I am not going to give you up, Ned. It

makes my spirit boil within me to think of his wanting me to do such a cruel, merciless action. Hollo, Ned, lad! are you crying? Ah, your leg is very bad now, I am afraid."

"No, no," said Ned, trying to wipe his eyes with the sheet; "no, no, it is not the pain—at least, not what you mean—and I shouldn't show it, only, as the matron says, I am so weak; but, Bernard, please tell me, are you coming here against your father?"

"Yes," said Bernard, whose passion had been fast rising to a climax; "yes, and I glory in it."

"Then no blessing will come on it, either for you or me," said the boy, sadly. "There is nothing that can come right if you go direct against your parents; so mother always told me. 'I will have mercy and not sacrifice.' Obedience first. Oh, Bernard, please don't mind when you have been so very kind to me, it makes me sad at heart, as if my heart would break, to think of your giving me up; but it must be so, and it may not be for always. I may get better, and when I am out of the Union, your father might not object; and if not, any way we shall meet in heaven."

With great earnestness the poor lad spoke, and he laid his white wasted hand on Bernard's; but Bernard only answered,—

"You don't know what he is; he is harsh, and without feelings. He spoke to me as if I was a dog, all my comings and goings in his hands, and I was determined to show him that I would not stand it to that extent."

"Oh, Bernard," said Ned, "I once angered my mother. Now I would give worlds to have her back again that I

might make up for that time. I forgot it when she died."

"Ay, one's mother, perhaps; but that's different," said Bernard, in a lower tone.

"Nay, Bernard, if your father was gone, you'd wish the same. At the Judgment Day, we shan't be asked whether it was father or mother we grieved; for there is God's commandment, and we have broken it."

"You take it so seriously, lad," said Bernard.

"Seriously," echoed Ned, his thin voice trembling with excitement. "Mother used to tell me, that the worst men often begin with despising their father and mother. Oh, Bernard, and to think that it is me that has brought you to this."

Here he became so faint that Bernard began to be alarmed, and called for help. It was a worse exhaustion than he had had before, and the matron looked gravely at his companion.

"You should not have let him talk like this," she said. "He is so delicate and excitable. I told you to keep him quiet."

Repentant Bernard would have slipped away; but Ned observed the movement, and made signs for him not to go. To avoid exciting him further, Bernard stayed; and as soon as Ned could speak, he called him to his bedside.

"I am dying, Bernard," said he, "and I shall never see you again. Do me this one thing. Ask your father's pardon. Promise me, please Bernard. For all the kindness you have done to me, do me this one thing. Will you?"

The words were gasped out with the most intense earnestness, and the large eyes fixed upon his face, until

Bernard's stubborn resistance gave way, and he said, "Well, I will."

Then a smile came over the wan face, the eyes closed, and he sank back upon the pillow.

"You had better go now," said the matron, "you have eased his mind;" and Bernard, half-stunned, walked out of the hospital, through the hall, and into the fresh air. He had but one thought, that this poor boy, so dear to him now, although unknown two weeks ago, was passing into another world, and that he had left him something to do which must be done.

Time had slipped away so fast, that it was now nine o'clock, and getting quite dusk, as he walked with a quick determined step into the quiet lane where the side-door of their house stood. Here his determination was put to the proof quicker than he expected; for his father was standing in front of the door with his hands behind him, as if he had come out to breathe the cool evening air, though in fact he had been waiting there at least half-an-hour. Bernard went straight up to him. A kind heart would have noticed the straight-forward, honest purpose the boy's demeanour showed.

"So you have been at the Union again," said his father, in a quiet tone.

"Yes," said Bernard, "but I am not going any more; and, father, I beg your pardon for having gone this time. It was not right of me."

"It was not right of you," said the father, with a sneer, "and I will show you what I think of it;" and so saying he produced a horsewhip, and taking hold of Bernard's unresisting arm, he laid it on him with a heavy and relentless hand. "Now go where you like," said he in

a tone of low rage, which sounded hopeless to his son ; and throwing him away from him, he went in and shut the door.

Then was every violent passion in Bernard's breast stirred to wrath against his father. He had come home to humble himself, and he had been received with blows ; and he was now, as he believed, turned out into the cold world without remorse or hesitation. One moment he paused, the next he had clenched his hands with determination, and was striding away even faster than he had come.

A thought of his mother did cross his mind, but it was thrust away again. Faster he walked through the town. I doubt if he would have known his mother had he haply met with her ; for he saw nothing, and blindly pursued his way along the road that led to the nearest railway station.

Up and down hill, straight along, his object, if he had one, was to get away as fast as he could, as far as he could, whither he cared not. As he approached the station, a late train was coming up. He hurried to the booking office. "A third-class ticket," said he. "To London?" asked the boy. Had he put the question in any other form, Bernard would have been puzzled what to answer, for he knew neither the destination of the train, nor yet his own, but here were both provided for him. "To London," he replied.

He had money to pay for his ticket, for it was one of his father's proud inconsistencies to take care that his son should not appear amongst his schoolfellows without pocket-money, and Bernard, unaccustomed to indulgences, was slow to spend it. In three minutes more, he was in

a carriage with a number of other people, on his way to the metropolis.

It was some time before he was conscious of their presence, but as the quiet position and the monotonous noise of the train somewhat soothed his agitation, he became more alive to what was passing round him.

"Of course, if a man wants to be independent, if he is not above working, and if he has an average weight of brains, that is the country for him," were the first words that fell upon his ear with any meaning in them.

"I have always heard," said another, and a meeker voice, "that those who could not get on here, were not likely to be successful there."

"Why?" asked the other, sharply.

"Oh, only, because, I'm sure I don't know; because they couldn't work, p'raps."

"All fudge," said the first speaker, "there's many a man in England that hasn't the opportunity. Many a one that is so oppressed by the trammels of society, or bound by the prejudices of his family, that he can't get on. Place that man in a wider sphere, one in which his peculiar genius, whatever that may be, natural talent I mean, will have unimpeded scope, and I say that man has a chance for the first time in his life. I speak from experience, sir. I left England twenty years ago, a disappointed, weak young man. I have returned worth more than I care to name. I thought foolishly that I should like once again to see my native place, the home of childhood that the poets talk about, sir. I found all changed, all either dead or wrapped in sleepy indifference. I emptied my purse amongst them, and I am going back

to-night to Australia, the only country that in future I shall care to own."

The train had been slackening in speed, and stopped here to give up the tickets, and the speech of the fluent orator was interrupted. Quite enough, however, had been said to attract the attention of Bernard. Without perceiving how much the speaker was reasoning from his own special case, his resolution was formed on these chance words. He would go to Australia. He was one of those unfortunate beings who found disappointment at home. He would go to this land of wealth, and make his own way there. But how, that was the question; and he was still turning that over in his mind, and his solitary remaining shilling in his pocket, when the train stopped, and it became necessary for him to determine upon the next step.

One after another the passengers turned out, and in the slight confusion for a moment on the platform, Bernard found himself jostled against the man whose words had so attracted him. In an instant his resolve was taken. The man, who was short and thick-set, with wiry grey hair, and a firm, thin-lipped mouth, had all his luggage in a leather bag in his hand, so there was no delay. He walked with quick steps out of the station towards an omnibus that was waiting for passengers. Bernard followed him closely, and screwing up his courage, said, "If you please, sir, will you excuse me, but——"

Before he had time to say another word, the man turned round, and said roughly, "Be off, you young beggar, or I will give you to the police."

This was an unpleasant result of his first effort at

independence, and Bernard had very nearly started off indignantly, but his necessity prevailed, and controlling himself, he said, as civilly as he could, "Sir, you mistake, I am not begging, but I heard what you said in the train, and I should like to go to Australia; could you put me in the way of getting there?"

Now we have called Mr. Bridges an orator; the fact was that he considered himself as such, and any one who appreciated his eloquence might be supposed to have got on his weak side, so upon hearing this tribute, he stopped short, and without ceremony, but with not unkindly eyes, he examined Bernard from top to toe, by the light of the gas-lamp that flared near them.

"Oh, yes, I can tell you how to get there easily enough. A ship sails from the London Docks at half-past two in the morning. It is now 10.45; so I have no time to stand talking to you here, but if you like to step in to this 'bus' with me, I will hear what further you have to say for yourself."

"All right," said Bernard, with rising spirits, and he willingly followed Mr. Bridges.

"Now, young man," said that gentleman, seating himself opposite to Bernard. They were the only passengers, except a shabby widow in the far corner, and a faded thin girl beside her. "Now, young man;" and he fixed his eyes upon him, and waited for "the young man" to speak.

"I have not much to say, sir," said Bernard, "except that I am thrown entirely on my own resources, and I think that I should like to begin life in a new world."

"What are your parents, what are your powers, and what are your resources?" asked the orator.

"It is no matter much, sir, I think, what my parents are, seeing they don't care for me—at least, my father doesn't," here Bernard could not help a slight quiver in his voice. "As for my means, I have none; but I can work. You see my hands and feet, sir, they would move with a will in getting my own livelihood."

"Y-e-s," said the man, with something between a sarcastic and a good-natured smile, and he slowly turned his right-hand whisker round and round, whilst he kept his head on one side, and his eyes still studying Bernard's face. "Ye-e-s," he repeated, "I know the style of thing. I have seen it before. What have you been brought up to?"

"I could turn my hand to anything when I was at home, but I was always at school in the daytime. I have had a good education, sir." Here a sharp twist of painful recollection came over him, as he for a moment realized that the education was stopped for ever,—that he had lost his master, his intelligent superior companions, and his prospects of mental improvement. It was a bitter thought.

"I know that," said Mr. Bridges, in answer to the last assertion. "It is easy to see that your schooling is above your breeding. Well, many people say that education is of no use in the colonies. That is a lie, sir. If a man has sense enough to know what to do with it, of course education will help him on. Can you keep accounts?"

"I was fond of mathematics, sir. I was considered forward in arithmetic, and I have made out all the Christmas bills for the last two years."

"Humph," said Mr. Bridges. "Take care, ma'am, I will hold your umbrella." This was addressed to one of

the two women, who were both now getting out. "What money have you?"

Bernard pulled out his shilling, not without a rush of colour to his cheeks. "That is all, sir."

"Upon my word you are candid," remarked Mr. Bridges. "So you think a shilling will take you to the Antipodes?"

"No, sir, I am not so devoid of sense as that," said Bernard, nettled. "I have heard of people working for their passage."

"I dare say you may, but they would have to be a little cooler in their temper than you appear to be, my youngster. A bridle on your tongue if I am to be of use to you. Now for your name, and any other particulars."

Bernard hesitated. The possibility of pursuit for the first time flashed upon him. But, no, of what value was he that he should be pursued? Still he hesitated.

"Come, out with it," said his companion, cheerfully.

"Bernard is one of my names," said the poor lad. "That is enough, is it not, at present?"

"You are an honest one, that I can see plain enough," returned the other. "Now tell me, have you done anything disgraceful that has led to this—any breaking of the laws in any way, or anything scandalous? It is not many young men, in your position, that I would ask such a thing of, and trust their answers, but I can rely upon you so far. A. B. is not easily deceived."

"You are right, sir," said Bernard. "What I do tell you, is the truth. I do not say that all I have done has been free from blame, but I have done nothing criminal, nothing that would matter to a soul beyond our own

household ; but I have been hardly treated," he added, bitterly.

Again Mr. Bridges twirled his whisker and considered. "If I help you," said he, "will you obey me, ask me no questions—but serve me, and bring me into no trouble on your account afterwards ?"

"I hope that I should not be so ungrateful," said Bernard. "I will serve you faithfully in anything that is not wrong, and that I will promise you."

"Give me your hand," said Mr. Bridges. "There now," as he grasped it in a vice of iron ; "now you are Adam Bridges' property. Depend upon it he will use you well. He is careful of his own ;" and with these words, uttered with the same strange kind of smile, he fell into a reverie, which lasted until the omnibus stopped at London Bridge.

"Now then, look sharp," he said, as he got out ; and after paying both fares, he ordered rather than requested Bernard to follow him, and led the way through dirty, low streets which, at that hour, seemed to be peopled by the very scum of humanity ; and in the midst of his own bewildering thoughts Bernard wondered at the strange things he saw.

Mr. Bridges never spoke to him, but walked rapidly, until they came to an eating-house which he entered. "Chops and stout for two," said he to the waiter, sitting down and ordering Bernard to do the same. When the food arrived, he helped Bernard first, taking care, as he had said, of his own ; but he did not talk to him. It was as if he meant to throw him at a distance, and so Bernard felt it, the first galling of a chain ; which, however, as yet, he had no wish to throw aside.

The meal finished, and the reckoning paid, Mr. Bridges next took him to a slop shop, at which he purchased a few necessaries for him ; and then they proceeded to the docks, where Mr. Bridges' luggage had been sent to meet him, and before long the colonist and his charge, or servant, or whatever he might be called, were on board a vessel bound for Sydney. Mr. Bridges arranged everything ; Bernard was to be a steerage passenger, whilst he himself was first-class ; and Bernard, besides, was to assist in waiting upon the cabin passengers, but he could not complain. Strange that dependence on his own father should have seemed so hard to him, and now he was glad to serve and depend upon a stranger. Very soon after his arrival on board, he had, by Mr. Bridges' orders, retired to his close berth, where, thoroughly wearied out with pain and excitement, he slept a long, sound sleep. Whether it was from this good beginning, or whether he was naturally a good sailor, neither now nor afterwards was he disturbed by sea-sickness ; and whatever toils he went through, however he felt that he was continually at the beck and under the control of his self-chosen protector, he was spared this misery. Immunity from bodily illness, however, perhaps only gave his mind more scope for thought. There was diversion, it is true, in the number and variety of the passengers, the movements of the crew, even the strange meals, the soup for breakfast, the hard beef for dinner ; but before the end of the first day, a sense of loneliness in the midst of numbers had crept over him. It was probable that Mr. Bridges wished to leave him to shift for himself, to see what stuff he was made of, as he would have expressed it, for he rarely addressed him except to give him orders, and

apparently took no notice of him. As for the steerage passengers, they were a rough set, and, resenting the contemptuous air with which he had at first viewed their society, and disliking also his refinement of language and manners, they offered him nothing but rudeness, which he had no power to put down, at least whilst his spirits were so downcast. It was on the evening of the second day, when after running about here and there after the whims and wants of some of the first-class ladies, he lay down in his narrow berth, that the tide of feeling turned, and a flood of regretful thoughts rushed upon him, and he saw clearly, for the first time, what he had done. That he had really renounced his parents perhaps for ever; had thrown himself amongst people who did not care if he was cast overboard, and that he was being rapidly taken to a land, where he would be homeless and a stranger.

His sisters seemed to rise up before him. Mary, so thrifty and skilful, who was always ready, whether it was a marble-bag, or a fracture in his jacket that he wanted sewing; Anne, whose delicate face had flushed so only yesterday—could it be only yesterday?—at the prospect of doing something that might please her father, and the little ones, even Elizabeth, as yet uncowed by the severity of the family rule, who used to run forward to meet him when she heard him come in from school, and call “Bernie, Bernie,” because she could not speak quite plain, and who would trot beside him, happy just to hold his hand. Yes, they had not been a family to show affection; and yet when the past was thus forcibly presented to him, he could see that his four sisters had waited upon him, watched him, and loved him, and that

without one thought of what he owed them in return, he had abandoned them.

For his father as yet his feelings were not yet un-mixed with bitterness ; but they were not wild, like yesterday's : he thought of him now as a parent, who had always, until this last sad evening, been just to him, who had at times talked to him as a father only talks to his eldest son, and at the bottom of his secret heart Bernard owned that his father could never have really meant to turn him out, that behind the harshness there was an affection which might have been relied upon. This, however, was now probably lost to him for ever.

Did his mother's image never come to him then, in these dreary hours ? Yes, it did. It came as he thought himself again a little child, kneeling before her to say his evening prayers. It came as he saw himself laid up with some childish illness, tossing with pain and fever, and he seemed to feel once more the cool, soft hands ministering to him.

It came, too, as he remembered her only a few nights ago, watching for him anxiously, hastening him to his food, standing near him with that pale, wrinkled face, still more harassed with fears for him, and with loving eyes that tried to smile as she spoke in cautious whispers to him. And this mother he had deserted. He, her eldest, to whom she might have looked for care and grateful tenderness, had forgotten love and honour and obedience, and had wounded her deeply ; and he could not now pretend to think it would not grieve her. This was the picture of all the others that he tried to shut his eyes to ; but it was no use. It haunted him not only now, but night after night afterwards, and these busy painful

thoughts returned until his remorse seemed too great for him to bear.

But let us leave the painful images that haunted the spirit of poor Bernard, as he was tossed to and fro on the waves of the Atlantic Ocean, and go back to the realities of those who lived outwardly the same as ever in Silver Street.

On that night that was so memorable in Bernard's history, his father, after he had shut the door upon his miserable son, had gone back to the house, with an additional sternness on his brow, but no other sign of anything having happened. Mrs. Ellis supposed that it was all on account of Bernard's being out, but she dared not allude to it, for fear of further irritating her husband.

At last, however, it grew so near bedtime, that she could no longer refrain, and she said, "I hope that nothing's happened to Bernard, Robert; he's not a boy to stay out so late without something."

"You've spoilt that boy, till I daresay he thinks he may come and go as he pleases," was all the answer she got, as he looked up for a moment from his newspaper. Jane was silenced, and went on sewing; but her fears were unabated. She could not tell that her husband himself was so uncomfortable that the newspaper was merely a blind to conceal his uneasiness, and that he had read line after line without knowing a word of its contents.

In another half hour he got up hastily, and saying abruptly, "I must look after him," took his hat and went out. Jane, softly following, heard him call "Bernard" in different places up and down the lane, which she thought curious, and wondered why her husband should suppose

him lurking about the house without coming in, for Bernard had never been a coward. Then she saw him go out into the street, and he did not return for what seemed to her a very long time. When he came in, he deliberately locked the door, and bolted it.

"Haven't you seen anything of him, Robert? Isn't he coming home to bed?" she asked in a trembling voice.

"Apparently not," he answered. "We will leave him out all night, and see how he likes that."

"Oh, Robert, something must have happened to him. He did all his lessons. I have been upstairs to see, and he went out about eight o'clock."

"Yes, and came back at nine," said the father. "Don't distress yourself, Jane. He went out against my express order, so when he came back again, I gave him a good beating, for which I suppose he is sulking somewhere; if he doesn't choose to come in, he may stay out."

"Oh, Robert," cried Jane, with tears in her eyes, "Oh, Robert, it will have broken his heart. He is such a tender boy. He can scarcely bear a hard word. He winces from it like a blow. I know how he will be fretting. Do let me go out to look for him. Let me tell him you have forgiven him."

"Don't make such a piece of work about it, Jane," was his reply. "Just come to bed. He will turn up fast enough in the morning when he wants his breakfast."

A few more attempts she made to induce her husband to resume his search, or to allow her to do it, but in vain, and at last she was obliged to take her anxious, aching heart to bed. She could at any rate rise early, and as soon therefore as there was a possibility of anyone being astir, she got up and away as noiselessly as she could; her

husband heard her all the while, though, and went out to meet or seek her boy. But it was too soon, so few people were up, so she slipped in again, and busied herself with household duties to put off the time ; every now and then opening the door, and giving a longing gaze up and down the street.

Earlier than his usual hour, her husband also rose, and before he took down the shutters, went out into the town. Without result, however, it seemed, for he returned with a gloomy countenance. After Mary had come down to manage things, Jane went out again, but with no better consequence. They sat down to breakfast, and no one except the little Elizabeth asked, "where is Bernard?" for the elder ones were already acquainted with, and sharing their mother's pain.

After they had all gone to school, the father said, "Mr. Barry will be wondering what has become of that fellow ; at least, unless he has taken himself straight there. Just mind the shop, Jane, whilst I go and see."

Before long he had presented himself at the door of the grammar-school, and obtained an interview with the head-master.

"I beg your pardon, sir, but is my boy here?"

"He is not present this morning," replied that gentleman. "Is anything the matter, Mr. Ellis?"

The father hesitated, he was scarcely prepared to explain, but as Mr. Barry waited for an answer, rather with the air that was said amongst the boys to make the most stubborn amongst them confess when he had done wrong, he said,—

"I don't know how you have found him, sir, but he has proved lately the most disobedient young scoundrel I

ever met with. I gave him his deserts last night, and I have not seen him since."

"You surprise me, Mr. Ellis," said the master. "My experience of your son is so different. There is no boy under my care so attentive to the rules of the school, and so amenable to advice as he. His abilities are above the average, and I have always hoped that he would turn out a son of whom you might well be proud."

Proud, indeed, Ellis was to listen to these words. Here was the promise of his great ambition being realized.

"Thank you, sir," said he half shyly, "but your management must be more successful a great deal than mine."

"I do not know what system you may pursue with your children," said Mr. Barry, "but it is true that I have observed in your son a most sensitive nature and strong passions. He is one of those of whom it is said they are easy to lead, hard to drive. We have never had any trouble with him ; but it is not impossible that at an age when self-control is most needed, and least forthcoming, unless there is strong religious principle to produce it, he might be provoked into a line of conduct quite inconsistent with his ordinary behaviour. I have certainly noticed a little pre-occupation and less interest in his studies during the past week, and yesterday such an evident gloom, that I had even determined to exercise the privilege of a friend as well as a master, and endeavour to discover whether wrong-doing had any hand in it."

"It was wrong-doing that he intended, sir," said Ellis.

"I am sorry to hear it," said Mr. Barry ; "and I regret that I did not attempt to gain his confidence a

little earlier. However, I trust, Mr. Ellis, that when your son returns to his duty, as I hope he will do immediately, you will receive him with indulgence; and pray believe that at any time I shall be ready to assist you in his guidance."

"Thank you, sir, I will," said the father, feeling rather like a schoolboy himself before the grandeur of the head-master in cap and gown and rounded periods, and with those words the interview was closed.

From the school, Ellis proceeded to the workhouse, where he thought it just possible, though with renewed anger at the thought, that Bernard might have taken refuge. Here both master and matron were full of Bernard's praises; but they had not seen him since last night, and were astonished that he had not reached home. Mrs. Corby began to look quite uneasy, and dwelt upon Bernard's great kindness to the orphan boy.

"We thought the poor thing dying when he left last night," said she. "They had been exciting themselves with talking. It seemed to me that the poor thing was fretting himself because he thought you did not like Bernard's coming here, and he begged him never to come any more; though I am sure the day will be dark to him if he does not see him, for it was what he looked forward to from morning till night."

Ellis groaned to himself, and got away as soon as he could, and he was going home in a strange state of mind, when all at once it struck him about the railway. At first he discarded the idea as too absurd, but it stuck to him, and in the end he found himself walking as hard as he could along the road that led to the railway station, though saying to himself all the way, "Ridiculous, the

boy is probably at home coddling with his mother now ;” and trying to justify himself by finding out that he had some business with a customer in that direction. Once arrived at the station, however, he forgot all about his customer ; for he obtained traces of Bernard, and on the strength of that, he himself took the next train to London, not knowing what he should do there, but hoping to make out something more. Bernard’s movements, however, had been so straightforward and so rapid, that he had attracted no notice at the London station ; and although the officials paid every attention to the distressed father, it was all in vain, Bernard had left no trace, and Ellis returned at night to a sonless home.

Here a miserable day had been passed by the mother, and those girls who were old enough to feel with her. It had been a very busy day, many customers had come no doubt partly from curiosity ; for their inquiries, though cautiously conducted, had sufficiently spread their misfortune, and Jane had to receive intrusive sympathy, and to answer well meant but tiresome questions, until by the time night came, and her husband returned, she was completely exhausted. For once her feelings broke through the crust of habit, the relief of seeing her husband safe made her throw herself upon him in tears, and for once he did not repulse her, but showed a forbearance, even kindness, that she had never before received from him. It was only for herself though, the mention of Bernard brought all his sternness back again.

“ He has taken himself away. He has chosen his own course. Let him go. I will never forgive him,” said the father. And soon afterwards he forbade his name being mentioned ; for the little Elizabeth’s cry for “ Bernie ”

was more than he could bear. He never spoke again of him himself, and no one could guess how the light seemed taken out of his life; the purpose from his labour; and how his heart cried out for his son until the cry was perforce stifled, and a bitter resentment nourished against his memory.

Some people, indeed, noticed that his hair had become streaked with white, and his step had lost its springiness; but he never complained, and replied to any approach to sympathy with more than his usual harshness.

Jane bore up for a week or two; then she broke down entirely, and was confined to her bed for several weeks, laid prostrate by nervous fever. Mary and Anne had both to be taken away from school; Mary to help in the shop, and Anne to wait on her mother. And now it was that all the treasures of Anne's warm heart began to show themselves. The little girl's natural awkwardness seemed to banish in her anxiety to be of use, her fingers became more skilful as she was trusted and grew confident, whilst she was so gentle and loving that it was always pleasant to have her near. There was a close bond of union, too, between the mother and her little daughter, which had not showed itself before. Jane had always been a religious woman, and anxious to do her duty in God's sight; but she had not yet possessed that strong faith in God's mercy that would have cheered her in all trials, and now she was to learn that through her child. Little Anne, rendered thoughtful by weak health, was beyond her age in spiritual gifts; and her earnest little prayers beside her mother, her careful reading of a verse or psalm occasionally, and her simple trust that the Lord Jesus was always caring for them, was the means, by

God's grace, of making the sick-room a place of blessing and a world of rest to the wearied mother.

As soon as Jane was downstairs again, the children were sent back to school ; for Ellis, determined in everything—although he cared little for his girls in comparison with what he used to feel for Bernard—still kept to his intention of giving all his children as good an education as he could possibly procure, so now he was obliged to make two important changes in his household. One was to keep a strong servant to help his wife, the other to take an apprentice for himself. And long before he had spoken of his intention to his wife, he had fixed upon the boy who was to fill this latter place. Several times during the last few weeks, he had visited the workhouse on one pretext or other ; and although he cut them very short if they began to speak about his son, yet he allowed them to talk about the stranger boy, who was now every day recovering, and, to the astonishment of all, it was Ned Fewster who hobbled into the house as the new apprentice. The father never said where he had met with him, but the mother and the girls soon found out that this was the boy whom Bernard had been so fond of, and were as kind to him as they dared to be ; whilst Ned himself, who was naturally of a most light-hearted disposition, thankful to find himself in the family of his dear benefactor, expanded in his good fortune, his cheerful face was soon like a sunbeam in the house, and he became a treasure to Ellis, because he served his master as one who knew that in doing his duty to him he was best serving his Lord in heaven.

After this, years passed away in Silver Street without bringing any more changes than time would naturally

work. Jane never recovered her strength entirely ; but Mary had grown up a stout handsome girl, and was a great help in the house. Anne was delicate still, but fair and pretty ; and the little ones were still at school. Over them all, there was a sort of cloud, caused by the one great misfortune, the loss of Bernard, and their enforced silence on the subject. As for the father, he appeared to think of nothing but making money ; and in this he certainly succeeded. His business had extended, his profit increased ; but his expenditure was much the same. He was known to be a man of property ; but he was hard and grasping, making no show of wealth in his way of living, and allowing no indulgence to his family. All this time, no tidings had ever been heard of Bernard, and all the secret inquiries that the father made on his periodical journeys to London were unavailing, and any stranger might have thought he was forgotten, when one summer's day, most unexpectedly, tidings arrived of him.

It was five years after Bernard's disappearance, when, one morning early, the matron of the workhouse came into the shop ; an unusual circumstance, for the Union did not deal with Ellis. There was only Ned Fewster in ; he was now a tall, straight, bright-looking youth, and he came forward with alacrity to greet and serve his friend. It was a small quantity of choice tea that she wanted apparently ; but while he was packing it up for her, she said, "Where's your master, Ned ?"

"Gone to London for the day," he answered.

"I should be glad to speak to Mrs. Ellis then," said the matron ; and Ned, seeing that something important had occurred, hastened to shew her into the parlour, where his mistress, with a pile of untrimmed stockings

before her, was striving to drive away the painful thoughts that this time of year always brought. She knew Mrs. Corby a little, still she felt rather surprised to see her. The matron, however, sat down, and made all proper inquiries after Mrs. Ellis's health and the children, before she opened the subject that had brought her out so early. At last she said, "You will excuse me, ma'am, for mentioning what may pain you, but I used to know your son some years ago."

Jane started, her heart seemed to stop beating, but she managed to say pretty quietly, "I know, I have often heard my poor boy speak of you."

"I was therefore very glad," continued the matron, "to hear some news of him to-day."

Now the pale cheek flushed vividly, Jane rose from her chair, and held out her hands; she could not speak.

"I had a little note from himself," said the matron, quickly. "He is safe and well, and in Australia."

Then Jane burst into tears, and as the matron gently laid her down on the sofa, she could do nothing at first to soothe the outpouring of the long pent-up sorrow. As soon, however, as she had somewhat relieved herself, the poor mother said,—

"Tell me more, oh, let me see it; let me see his own handwriting. My Bernard, my own son!" And then Mrs. Corby, pulling a large letter out of her pocket, gave it to Mrs. Ellis, saying,

"He enclosed this for you; mine was but a few lines, asking me to give it to yourself alone; so now I will leave you to read it. May you be comforted!"

Then she went away, and poor Jane, her eyes still blinded with tears, began to devour the letter.

“My dear Mother,—My first words must be to ask your forgiveness, and that of my father. Most humbly do I beg you to forgive me. I have been wilful and disobedient, and I have caused you great trouble, for which I am very sorry. It is only a week since I had the first tidings of you, and that was from a son of Stephenson’s of the Black Bull, who was passing through Sydney to go up the country, and came to our store. He did not know me, but I recollected his face quite well, and I was wild with pleasure to see it. From him I learned much news that was precious to me ; but I also heard that you had been ill, that you were much altered, and that your illness dated from the time of my leaving home. It is I then that am the cause of your ill-health. You have fretted over my conduct. My dear mother, my eyes were opened at once, and I saw what I had done, for the first time, in its true colours. Before that I had grieved for myself, but not for you. I thought you would not care much about me. Oh, mother, how had I poisoned my mind by my own sins, when I could think that your dear affection would fail even your unworthy son ! It seems to me that my heart must have been very hard all these five long years. I have worked diligently, and my master speaks well of me ; but I have been hopeless and embittered. If it please God to help me, I will be so no more.

“The night I left Wilverton, I met with my present master in the train. He took me out to Sydney with him, and immediately on our arrival he placed me in his store as a sort of warehouseman or porter. The amount of work I have had to do would astonish some of the

shopboys in Wilverton, for everything is on a large scale in these stores, and my master is not one to suffer any one to be idle on his premises. This has been very good for me, you may be sure. I suffered much upon the voyage, and for a year after I arrived, but I deserved it; and after my master had tried me in every possible way, to see if I was really honest and really anxious to earn my bread, he advanced me by degrees, until now I am a clerk, and receive a salary amply sufficient for my wants.

"I have seen little of the country, for I have never had a holiday, but the variety of people of all nations who come into the store affords constant interest to me. At first I could not bear to think of my old studies; they reminded me of all from which I am so completely cut off, but of late years I have tried to revive them, and by snatching a little reading out of some old books that I have been able to buy, I have prevented myself from entirely losing all that I had learned. The remembrance, however, of Mr. Barry and of my old schoolfellows is still very painful to me. I often think, too, of that poor Ned, who was the remote cause of all this sorrow. It was happy for him that he died. Mother, dear, will you write me one line to say that you and my father forgive me? I do not speak about the future, for it must be just as my father likes.

"To all my sisters, and especially to little Elizabeth send my love. Five years! It is a long time. Perhaps they have forgotten me. But you have not, mother. Still love me then, and believe that I am ever

"Your affectionate and repentant son,

"BERNARD ELLIS

It may well be understood how the mother gloated over every word of this letter, how often she read it, how she wept over it, and how she praised God in her inmost soul for restoring to her her son. The sisters received the news as might have been expected of them. Mary, who was in the market when the letter came, was quietly glad; Anne was in a tremble of sympathy with her mother's joy, and the children listened as if it was a pleasant story. Ned was summoned to the general rejoicing; he had already heard the good news from Mrs. Corby, but he was delighted to read the letter, he could even smile over the allusion to his own supposed death—and there was no cloud that day over the sunshine of the house. But it was sundown when the father came back again.

Jane was so anxious to tell him, that she scarcely waited until he had hung up his hat before she said—"Robert, here is a letter from our Bernard."

What strong emotions filled the father's breast as he thus suddenly heard that his son was found, no one could guess, for he seemed to be absorbed in placing his hat straight upon the peg; then he turned round and said—"I thought I had desired that his name should never be mentioned to me."

"Oh, Robert," said his wife, sorely wounded, "but here is such a nice letter from him. He is in a store in Australia, and getting on very nicely, only he wants you to forgive him."

"I have nothing to do with him," said the father, coldly; "as he baked, so he must brew. Let the subject drop."

"Oh, Robert, my poor boy," cried Jane; "you would

not have him go on in this way in a far off land, without a kind message from his father. Just read and see how he has fretted."

"I care nothing about him," said Ellis, doggedly. "He took himself off, and he must take care of himself. I desire that you will not write to him, nor trouble me with his name any more," and so saying he went upstairs to bed. That he slept much is doubtful.

The next day, his poor wife, with a courage that she had never shown before, urged him to change his mind, and implored him to let her send if it were only one line of reconciliation; but it was all in vain: he would not in the least relent; and Jane was finding it difficult not only to submit herself, but to prevail upon Mary and Annie to moderate their indignation, when she was relieved by Ned, who, although he never put himself forward, knew pretty well all that was going on in the house. He came to her, during a short absence of her husband's, and said, "I hope you will not mind, ma'am, but I took Mr. Bernard's address from the letter you showed me, and I have written to him. I had much to tell him of what has passed in these five years, and of your kindness to me, and I said, too, ma'am—I hope I was not wrong to do so—that your love for him was quite unchanged, and I told him of the joy that the news of him had given to you, and to his sisters."

This was just what Jane might have wished, and was the greatest relief to her. She could now wait in the hope that her husband would in time give way, and, meanwhile, she could allow herself the pleasure of thinking upon him, as comparatively safe and prosperous, labouring hard and striving to do his duty.

There was another hope, too ; they might hear again, and so they did. By the answering mail Ned received a letter, full of disappointment naturally, but still striving to be patient and hopeful, and this, again, was a great comfort to the mother. From this time a regular correspondence between the boys not only kept Jane's spirits up, but kept alive the sisters' loving interest in their brother, and the days for Australian packets to arrive were secret jubilees in the family. They had all been too much accustomed to want of confidence towards their father, to feel all this a weight upon their conscience as it might have been felt in a happier home, and their duty and obedience satisfied itself by never sending even a message to poor Bernard, but allowing Ned to be their sole interpreter.

Four more years thus passed away with little change, except the heaping up of more and more riches. At intervals, the mother used to pluck up courage and say, "Will you let me write to Bernard, Robert?" but the answer was always "No;" and then Ned's next letter could hold out no hope to the poor fellow, who quite yearned for a word from his mother herself, or for a sign of softening in his father.

By this time Ned Fewster had become a tall young man, out of his apprenticeship. He now had a salary—for his shrewd master knew his worth ; but he still boarded with the family, although he might have had lodgings and been much more independent, seeing that his master was often as harsh to him as if he had been still a beggar-boy ; but Mrs. Ellis herself had asked him to stay, and, thinking that he might be useful to her, he stayed. There was a boy under him now, and with Ned to

trust, when he turned his back, Ellis could sometimes afford an hour's holiday to look after his property, which was his sole idea of recreation. This he would scarcely have allowed himself, but that his health had greatly failed of late, and the medical man had told him that he absolutely must take exercise and ease of mind. It seemed strange, perhaps, that Ellis had consulted one, and that without being urged to do it ; but he was a timid man in reality, and quickly pulled down ; rarely ill at all ; but when he was—like many bullies—an arrant coward at heart. And strange pains from which he had been suffering made him go to see a doctor, and once having called him in, he had to spend more money on medicine than he liked. The attacks of pain came on so suddenly, too, that he did not like to walk far alone, and so he frequently took one of his daughters with him. Quite a change from the eventless life in Silver Street, and if he was in a pretty good humour, not a disagreeable one to them.

It happened that one day Annie was out with him, and they went to see a field upon which some women were employed. As they passed through the gate they met one of the women coming out. She curtsied, and was passing quickly on, when Mr. Ellis stopped her. "Where are you off to, at this time of day?" said he.

"They have just come to tell me that my little Tom is very bad, and I must go home to nurse him, poor bairn."

"Please yourself," said Mr. Ellis, in a hard tone ; "but you will only get half a day's wages."

"It is three o'clock, sir ; however I can't help it ; I must go," said the woman, and whilst he was looking at his watch, she hurried on.

They went round the fields, and as they were coming

back they saw an old woman picking up dry sticks. Anne knew her a little, for she often went on secret little deeds of charity for her mother, and this old woman had been one recipient, so she spoke kindly to her as she passed.

When the old woman had slowly unbent her aged back, and saw that it was Mr. Ellis, she called out after them : " Oh, if you please, sir, would you be as kind as to let us have another shilling next Saturday ? "

" I have nothing to do with it, woman," said Mr. Ellis, turning round again, " whatever your name may be. I know your face well enough, from seeing it so often at the Board. I have no doubt you receive as much as you ought, and more than the parish can afford."

" You would not say so, sir, if you saw us at home," returned the old woman ; " there's Mary always fixed to her chair, and if she earns a shilling now and then by knitting at her best times, that is the very outside ; and then there's James, my husband, sir ; he's quite bedfast, and all the better, too, in one way, for we can keep out of the way of his tongue anyhow, when he's in his tantrums."

" Oh, Betty, you should not speak so of him," said Anne, in a tone of mild reproof ; " you know how much he is afflicted."

" Well, Miss, but you don't know what it is night and day ; and as for afflictions, well, I suppose they ought to make him think of his latter end, which, sure enough, he never does."

" Come along, Anne," said her father, impatiently ; " you may think yourself lucky if you don't lose all the help you receive already, you ill-conditioned old woman," and, without waiting to hear the excuses and entreaties

that the woman, in her fright, was now pouring out, he walked away.

As they entered the town, they met one of the curates, who stopped as they drew near.

"I wanted to speak to you, Mr. Ellis," he said, "on behalf of a boy called Reuben Taylor; I hear that there is a charge against him of trespassing and breaking down one of your hedges. I don't mean to defend the mischief; but I believe the boy is sorry for it, and his mother, who is, as perhaps you know, a hard working widow, is in great distress at the thought of her son being brought up in a police court."

"She should have taught him better then," said Mr. Ellis.

"I believe that she has tried to do so," replied the curate; "but the best brought up sons sometimes turn out badly."

Mr. Carew did not know the Ellis family history, being but a new-comer to the town, or he might have omitted this general remark. He, however, went on to say,—
"He is not at all an ill-disposed lad, and he would make an apology to you. You might thrash him if you liked," added Mr. Carew, with a smile, again quite unconscious that he had thus playfully made a painful allusion, "if you would only forgive him, and withdraw the charge."

"I never forgive, Mr. Carew," said Ellis. "We might have all the young rascals in the town bird-nesting and pulling down the young trees, if an apology would make amends when they were caught. I mean to make an example of young Taylor."

"I am sorry that I have troubled you in vain," said Mr. Carew; "but if, when you think the matter over at

a more serious moment than this, you should be willing to grant forgiveness, I shall still be happy to forward the affair by bringing the lad to you ;” and raising his hat to Anne, who stood blushing and sad, the curate turned down another street.

Anne could not help sighing, as they walked on.

“Those parsons,” said her father, “think that they may have all their own way. They encourage idleness and sneaking, and every canting hypocrite can gain their ear.”

“Oh, what’s the matter, father?” cried Anne, for he had stopped suddenly, with an exclamation of pain.

He could not speak for some minutes, and leaned against the railings of a house that they were passing.

When the spasm was over, it always left him weak, and it was only by the support of the fragile Anne that he reached his own shop-door.

Here Ned saw them coming, and hastened to meet them.

“Anne,” he said, in the respectful, but tender tone he always used in speaking to her, “it is too much for you ;” and taking her place, he helped, almost carried, his master into the parlour, where he was laid upon the sofa. The spasms were abating, but the exhaustion was great, and in some alarm they sent for Mr. Chartris. That gentleman also looked serious, and before the day was out, the father was ill in bed—a strange event, for he had not had an illness to lay him up for forty years. In about a week, however, it seemed natural enough to them. Ellis was not too ill to talk and attend to his affairs, and was not obliged to be sat up with ; but he was weak, suffered great pain at times, and Mr. Chartris had said nothing yet about his getting up.

He took a fancy to have Anne chiefly with him in the day time,—not to sit still beside him, though, for he kept her going up and down with orders and messages, and sometimes fetching Ned up to speak to him, whilst his irritability was often very great, and could be only equalled by her patience. Unfortunately, her strength was not equal to her good-will, and she soon became so weak and pale, that the mother tried to relieve her sometimes. But “Where’s Anne? Tell her to come,” was his constant cry; for, like most people who are selfish when they are well, he was doubly so when laid up. People speak of the softening effect of illness, but it seems to me that when illness comes upon a person who has habitually lived without the only real softening influence, the love of Christ, his evil dispositions only come out the stronger, and contradiction, impatience, and selfishness show themselves unrestrained. It was so, at least, with Robert Ellis.

For nearly a month he went on in this way, getting worse instead of better, and deriving no benefit from the various medicines that were tried upon him, until at last he became thoroughly wearied, and declared that he would have it out of Mr. Chartris how long he was to lie there. Once having taken the resolution he was not likely to dally about performing it, and accordingly the next time the doctor came, he ordered them all out of the room, and asked the question. What the answer was he never told any of them. They saw his face growing more ghostly strange, and haggard in its expression, but when they suggested that he was in pain or feeling worse, he denied it passionately. Yet there was some sad change evidently. He seldom slept, but used to follow his wife

about the room with wistful eyes, and then turn his head aside on the pillow, and groan so terribly that it tore her affectionate heart to hear him. Yet he would endure no sympathy.

One day when he had been more than usually cross, and Anne had been sent hither and thither, uselessly, and had always been in the wrong, and still the same quiet smile, and ready obedience awaited him, when he told her to go somewhere else, he all at once looked at her, and said,—

“Child, what is it makes you like that? Why don’t you get tired of my fancies?”

Anne opened her eyes wide with surprise; such an address was so strange to her.

“Why are you and your mother so different from everybody else?” he continued.

“I don’t know, father,” Anne replied; “only mother is not strong, and she says I am not either. I take after her in that. The others are all hearty like you,—at least, like what you used to be.”

“Ay,” groaned Ellis, “what I used to be. Anne, come closer to me. How would you do without your father? You needn’t start, child, I’m going, but you are not to tell your mother. I suppose she would fret, though I have not been the man to her I should have been. Nobody else will care.”

“Oh, father, how can you say so?” said Anne, looking up with tearful eyes, “and you our father. We should be sure to grieve if it was so, but my mother says you will get better when the hot weather is over. The heat is very weakening.”

“Not better, child; I shall be worse, always getting

worse ; how could you bear that, child, if it was yourself ? Tell me ! ”

“ It would seem dreadful, father, but yet, if it was God’s will, I must.”

“ How could you bear it, child ? ” he asked again, impatiently.

“ God would help me, father. I should pray to Him, and He would send me strength. Jesus says, ‘ My strength shall be sufficient for thee. As thy day is, so shall thy strength be. ’ ”

“ Say the prayer for me, Anne, that you would say, only put to it, ‘ miserable sinner, help a miserable sinner. ’ ”

Anne trembled, and her colour came and went, but her father’s tone was too full of earnestness to be resisted : so she knelt down, and then, in the words of Him who felt, perhaps, more deeply than any other mortal man that he was indeed a miserable sinner, and yet who more than any other mortal had strong hope and trust in the one refuge, the one salvation, she prayed, “ Have mercy upon me, O God, after Thy great goodness,” and so all through the Psalm, the 51st, and the Lord’s Prayer, and then she got up and sat quite still, without turning her eyes towards the averted face of her poor father.

No more passed between them that day, but the next, and for many afterwards, as soon as they were alone together, he used to say, “ Now pray, child,” and she prayed. That was all. She did one day brace up her courage to say,—“ Father, have Mr. Carew ; he would pray for you better than I can.” But he was angry, and she dared not ask him again, though it grieved her to see *that oftentimes* the tears rolled down his cheeks, when

she was praying, and she did not know how to comfort him.

Little indeed could the innocent girl have entered into the struggles that were torturing her father. How his past life, absorbed in earth, in selfish aims, in the pursuit of gain, without one really earnest striving to know and love God ; how it rose before him in bitter recollections ; and how, amidst all, returned again and again the thought of his boy, Bernard, whom he had driven away from him —whom he should never see again.

For this was what Mr. Chartris had told him, that his disease was mortal, beyond medical skill to cure ; that he might rally, he might linger, but that before many months were over, shop, lands, wife, and children, all must be left behind, and he must depart into another country where he had no treasure stored. Well might his groans be bitter ; well might his ears drink in the promises of infinite mercy that his soft-voiced, gentle daughter read to him.

It was now that he reaped the benefit of one of the few actions of his life to which he could look backward with any satisfaction, that was the taking of Ned Fewster into his service. The business was attended to just as if he had been himself downstairs. Ned never flagged ; early and late he was at his work, Mary and the mother helping him when there was an unusual press ; and he yet found leisure for frequent short visits to his master, in which he always gave him a cheerful view of what was going on below. It might be that Anne's sweet smiles gave him courage ; at any rate, he was now, even for him, unusually bright, rather as if he knew of something that pleased him much, so that it had even crossed

Mrs. Ellis's mind that Ned's spirits were almost too gay for a househo'd so afflicted. They scarcely appreciated, perhaps, the benefit it was to them to have an inmate so uniformly cheerful. He possessed, however, the regard and confidence of all.

It was now two months since the father's illness had first begun. He sat up a little every day, but his weakness was pitiable, whilst his constant nurse, Anne, was reduced to a mere shadow.

The poor girl had never told her mother what the father had said about his own state, but nevertheless her own penetration had confirmed her fears. The strange preoccupation of her husband during the last few weeks, his indifference to things that would before have angered him, and, above all, his almost kindness to herself, were all alarming symptoms to her. But he avoided all allusion to his health, when it was possible, until one night, in the middle of summer—the anniversary of Bernard's going away, it was—he was so much worse, and had so much pain, that she could not refrain from showing her great fears.

"You must be quite worn out, honey," she said.

"I shall be better soon," he answered ; "or if not, what matter ?"

Jane then could not restrain her tears.

"What, crying for me, lass !" said he. "Ay, thou hast been faithful," and the bitter groans that followed told of his great anguish.

"Robert, honey, what can I do for thee ? O Lord, help him !" So ran her piteous words, and then he, with the barrier once broken down, poured out in return his *feelings*.

"Jane, do you know what is the matter with me? You may call on the Lord for help, but will He help, do you think? How many have called on me for help, and I have turned away from them! In that day will not the Lord turn away from me, and say, 'I know thee not.' Where is my son? the son I worked and saved for? He said, 'Forgive me, father,' and I drove him away. Will not the Lord drive me away when I try to enter the gate of Heaven?"

Then the faith of his poor wife rose above her feeble spirit, and she said,—“Him that cometh unto Me, I will in nowise cast out. Though your sins be as scarlet, yet shall they be white as wool;” and by degrees the holy words upon her lips served to calm him, except when the paroxysms of pain returned, and then, with groans of anguish, and cries of ‘Bernard, my only son!’ he struggled on, until, when the morning dawned and the summer sun had risen, a little slumber visited his eyes.

It was at this time that Jane, weak and wearied, walked towards the window and drew the curtain aside, that she might look out upon the cool morning. There was rarely any one astir at that early hour, and she was surprised to see a young man walking backwards and forwards in front of the house—still more surprised to feel her own heart leap with some strong emotion. “It is nonsense,” said she, and yet she looked again. No, it was no one she had ever seen before. A tall, fine, broad-shouldered young man, with brown curls clustering under a travelling cap. He was at some distance now, but surely he would turn again. With an impulse she did not stop to question, she stepped softly out of the room, and tapped gently at the door of the one Ned Fewster

sleep in. He came out almost directly, dressed as usual. To her glance of astonishment he replied, "I thought you might want me—master struck me as being so much worse last night."

"Ned!" said his mistress, almost without hearing his words, "there is a young man walking backwards and forwards up and down the street. I'd like you just to look out at him."

A strange, eager look of delight crept over Ned's face, and in another minute he had slipped downstairs, put his shoes on, and was out in the street. How Jane's heart beat as she waited! What did she expect? Certainly not more than the reality, for as she stood on the stairs Ned came back and beckoned her: she hurried down, and was led or carried into the parlour in Bernard's arms.

"My boy, my Bernard!" she cried, but words failed her, nor can we describe her joy. These are rich moments, foretastes of the joy of eternal re-union in heaven! There was no time for explanation, the wife's second thought after the first gush of delight was over, was for her husband, that he might miss her, and with another close embrace, she left Bernard, and crept softly back into the bedroom, hoping that as yet her husband might not have awakened.

The ears of the sick are, however, often sharpened to intensity; and when she entered the chamber she found her husband trying to raise himself in the bed, that he might the better hear what was going on, and her tearful eyes, and face full of agitation assured him that it was something more than common.

"What is it, Jane?" he asked.

"Never mind, Robert, honey; lie down again, you may bring on the pain."

"I will know. You make me worse. Jane, tell me," and his gasping breath told her that he would not be satisfied without. She went close up to him, and whispered—"It was news of Bernard, our son; don't be vexed, Robert."

"Of Bernard! He has come," exclaimed the suffering man with sudden strength. "O God, thou hast forgiven me,—'Bernard!'" The call reached the ears of his son, who was not indeed far away, and in another moment, Bernard was on his knees beside his father, their hands clasped in mutual forgiveness. For the next few hours there was nothing to be done but to watch and to try to alleviate the father's sufferings. The girls, hurriedly awakened,—for all thought that he was dying,—were stunned with astonishment to see a man, whom they were told was Bernard, standing over their father, as if he had been there always, taking the quiet direction of everything, and supporting their mother with a calm manliness that fitted him for the post.

As for Bernard's own feelings, they were not to be described. The joy of meeting and being reconciled, joined to the fear that he had but arrived to witness the last moments of his father, who was now dearer to him than he had ever been before. Happily the sorrow was spared him for the present, and the joy was left. Before noon, the danger had passed, and Mr. Chartris gave them hopes that with care he might be even better than before. But he ought to be kept quiet, and this was the greatest difficulty. He would not be still a moment if his son were out of his sight, and when he was near him, he

would talk. It was no use trying to check his desire to know everything, so Bernard began at the beginning and gave him a slight sketch of his Australian life, speaking very quietly, and omitting any painful allusions. And then he told him how his strange arrival had come about. How his master had entrusted him with a commission to England ; how he had written to tell Ned ; and how on his arrival in London he had found a letter waiting for him, from the same faithful friend, with an account of his father's illness ; how he had lost not a moment in hastening to Wilverton ; and how, not daring to disturb them in the night, and, not knowing how he might be received in the morning, he had paced up and down for an hour, until Ned had opened him the door, and brought him to his mother's arms.

"You will take care of her," said his father, when he had finished. "You must not go away again, Bernard ; there will be plenty for you all."

"I must take care of you first, father," he answered, "and that is not to let you talk or listen any more just now. Only wait till you are a little better, and you shall tell me all that you wish me to do, and I will obey you."

The father shook his head, but with a strange docility he now tried to do what his son told him, and at last, sleep, an almost unknown visitor, came to restore his prostrate strength.

After that he improved wonderfully. There was no complete recovery possible, but Bernard, in the face of this opinion, would not despair. Every tender attention was bestowed upon his father. By his persuasions, Mr. Carew was allowed to come, and under his ministrations,

whilst Ellis's repentance was not lessened, his hopes were fixed upon the unfailing love of the Saviour: the infinite mercy which endureth for ever, and the comparative repose of his soul seeming to impart strength to his body, he lived longer than the most sanguine could have hoped. A few months, however, of happy re-union with his son, during which his patience seemed to strengthen with his sufferings, and he died at last in Hope.

Then Bernard fulfilled his wishes. He went for a time to a farmer's in the North, where the same energy and perseverance that had made him so useful in his Australian master's store, served to enable him to overcome the difficulties of his new profession. As soon as he had gained experience enough, he settled on the property his father had bought for him, with his mother and three sisters, leaving Anne, the happy wife of Ned, now sole manager and a partner in the thriving business in Silver Street; and here he, at length prevailed upon Mr. Bridges to come over and see what an English home was really like, but Mr. Bridges only persuaded Mary to go back with him and share his opulence in Australia: so it did not seem as if Bernard had convinced him of the superiority of his native land.

But Bernard knew and appreciated his own happiness. To do justly, and to love mercy, was the motto of his life. From the poor man his face was never turned away, and the blessing of Peace rested upon his house.

Amy Annesley.

"Blessed are the pure in heart : for they shall see God."

"And for His cradle and His throne,
Chooseth the pure in heart."—KEBLE.

I SAY, Margaret, are you going to see the christening?" said one little girl to another in a village school.

"I can't, I've father's dinner to take," replied the other, with a strangely care-worn look for eight years old.

"Silence!" cried the monitor, herself only a child of twelve. "Lettice Moden, you're talking again : move down two places directly."

Lettice Moden, the first speaker, a rosy-faced child of seven years old, pouted her lip, but she was obliged to lose her two places. Before ten minutes were over, however, her slate was lying neglected on her knee, and she was whispering diligently to her new neighbours. Again she was in disgrace, and this time she had to stand out in the room, where lounging first on one leg and then on the other, and gazing idly on her companions, she might have borne the punishment with indifference, had not the schoolroom-door opened, and Mr. Price, the clergyman, appeared. This was, indeed, a trial. If Lettice had an ambition, it was to be called a good girl by Mr. Price,

and here she was set out for public gaze as a naughty one. Her face reddened, and as Mr. Price, after talking a little to the schoolmistress, came near to her, she hung it down, ashamed.

"Who is this?" said Mr. Price, looking at her, but not unkindly. "Lettice Moden. Oh, dear! I thought, Lettice, you were going to try to be so steady?"

Lettice made no answer, except by raising her face sideways, and looking at the vicar for a moment with her large blue eyes, and then beginning to roll up the corner of her pinafore.

"I have just been to tell Miss Simms," continued he, "that all the good girls are to go to church to the christening. I shall be sorry if you are not one of them."

At these words the little face puckered up, and a shower of tears came out.

"For shame, Lettice Moden," said the monitor, indignantly. "That's it, if you please, sir."

"What's it?" asked Mr. Price, rather puzzled.

"She wanted to go and see the christening, so she has never attended to anything all the morning," replied the girl.

At this, Lettice's sobs became louder, and the mistress, annoyed that the order of the school should be so disturbed, came forward to see what was the reason of it.

But Mr. Price said, "Thank you, Miss Simms, we will not interrupt you. Lettice will cease crying, and come with me into the class-room."

Very likely that the work of the whole school would not be interrupted! When Mr. Price took the little girl by the hand, and led her away, every eye was turned

them then with sympathy or curiosity, and it required all Mrs. Simms's authority to regain their attention.

When Mr. Price and his charge had arrived in the street, Lettice's burst of passion had subsided, and she stood before him pretty quietly.

"Now, Lettice," said he, "tell me why you cried."

"I must, sir, I wanted to go and see the christening."

"Why did you wish so much to go?" asked Mr. Price.

Lettice hung her head down, but she answered, "They say the baby is to have a white lace frock on, and mother says there's a real diamond in mine and gold, that it will be wonderful."

"What is the baby coming to church for, Lettice, in its white lace frock?" said the clergyman.

"I must, sir, it is to be christened," replied the little girl, quite readily.

"What is that?" asked Mr. Price again.

Lettice now looked up with quivering eyes, and she made no reply. But when Mr. Price went on to ask her if she knew that poor poor dear Margaret, and then what was she doing at her christening, she answered him in the words, "Oh, Margaret really married, for she had a good husband."

"Yes, Lettice," said Mr. Price, with an approving smile. "You were brought to church as the little children that we read of in the Bible were brought to Jesus, that He might bless you. He made you good, and taught you what the very sign that you might have of His blessing, that all you go to Heaven. The children who have been blessed by Christ should have no naughty tempers: they should be obedient and gentle always." Lettice had forgotten that reply. "You

must strive to be a better girl, Lettice, or you will grieve the Lord Jesus, and take yourself far away from Him who has been so good to you."

"Yes, sir," said Lettice, making an effort to stand up straight, and to smooth her little face into a pleasant look again.

"And if you do not get all the things you want, you must try never to be cross, because the Lord Jesus loves you to be patient, and to try to be like Himself, who suffered dreadful things, and even death, for our sakes, that He might make us good and happy here and in Heaven. It is a blessed thing to be baptized. When the baby comes into church to-day, the Lord Jesus will be there, although we cannot see Him, and all the people will kneel down and pray that He will give the little child a robe of righteousness, and make it His faithful soldier and servant for evermore. We cannot see that robe, but it will be far richer and more beautiful than its white lace frock; and in that robe, if it keeps close to Jesus, it will go to Heaven when it dies. Now, Lettice, you may join your companions, and go to the baby's christening."

This permission was most unlooked for. At another time the little girl might have danced for joy; even in the vicar's presence, she might have given some noisy sign; but his words had solemnized her, and she only looked up at him, as if to see if it were really true, then dropped a curtsey, and went into the other room.

"This child may go to church with the others, Miss Simms," said Mr. Price, after seeing her quietly take her place in the class. "I think she will try to give you no more trouble," and so saying, he left the school; and very

Seven years afterwards, Lettice Moden was still at school, with the same round, pretty face, with the same warm feelings, and with almost the same capacity for getting into mischief. She was a neat, clean-looking girl, with light hair that had a curly wave in it ; she sewed so well, that it was always her needlework that was put forward when the Inspector came ; and, indeed, she had capable fingers about everything, was quick, though rather too much inclined to bustle about her affairs, a leader amongst the other girls, and yet, though often scolded, she was a decided favourite with the strict Miss Simms.

To Mr. Price she was still an object of kind interest. A girl of such a nice, candid disposition, it was pleasant to exchange words with. She received advice, too, so modestly, and her merry smile changed sometimes into such a deeply thoughtful look when she was impressed by any serious subject,—“ But,” said Mr. Price to his sister, after he had been obliged to reprove her for some levity amongst her companions in coming away from church, “ much will depend upon the next few years of that girl’s life. I doubt whether she really has any religious principle strong enough to keep her from the snares of youth ; and her easy manners, her sociable ways, and above all, her love of dress, may lead her far away from the path of right before she knows that she has wandered from it.” One day, about this time, a very hot day in June it was, the school was as busy as usual, Miss Simms sitting at her table with a cluster of girls near her—one, who wanted to be “ fastened on,” another to have a fresh piece of work fixed for her, a third to say, with some trepidation, that she had dropped a loop in her stocking ;

the rest of the scholars were sewing or yawning, or getting knots in their thread, and one girl was sitting at a distant desk doing a long sum as a punishment. It was at this moment that a knock was heard at the schoolroom door, and every eye being at once directed towards it, they saw, through the glass which formed half of it, a footman in the familiar livery of the family at the Hall. At the same time the culprit, Mary Robinson, let her slate fall with a loud crash, but she was unnoticed for once ; Miss Simms laid down the soiled work she had been scolding over, pushed aside the girl who owned it, and was advancing to know his business, when, to her great astonishment, he was followed by no less a person than his lady, Mrs. Annesley. She was tall, with handsome features and a calm, imposing demeanour, and accustomed to receive signs of respect from all around her ; for the Annesleys had been the only important family in this neighbourhood for many years, and their large property gave them influence. This Mrs. Annesley had been at the Hall for about nine years, but a visit from her to the school had been unknown ; so that it required all the self-possession that a schoolmistress is trained to have upon her own ground, to enable Miss Simms to receive the great lady without unbecoming nervousness. The children all stood up and curtsied, some of them two or three times over ; whilst the lady first surveyed them with her eye-glass ; then, putting her perfumed handkerchief to her nose, cast a mild, despairing glance towards the windows. They, however, were all wide open at the top, nothing more could be done ; Miss Simms and the monitors all knew well enough that the atmosphere was *most* oppressive, but they had very little idea of the effect

such poisoned air had upon the lady, who never breathed any but the purest, who always had sweet flowers and perfumes around her, and from whose neighbourhood unpleasant things were always kept away. For Mrs. Annesley was one of those fine ladies who spend their large means chiefly in providing for themselves a life of selfish luxury : happily there are not many to be met with nowadays, when all classes are awakening to the duty of labouring in some degree for the good of their fellow-creatures, and of thus bearing one another's burdens ! The one living being for whom Mrs. Annesley was capable of making any sacrifice, was her child ; and it was for the sake of her, little Amy Annesley, the only one, and the heiress of Aston, that she had now given herself the pain and trouble of entering the village school.

The little lady was delicate, had always been so ; not all the wealth, nor the care that wealth could buy, had given her health ; she was a languid, fragile child, gentle and yielding, but so thoughtful for her age that nurses shook their heads, and many had prophesied that " Miss Amy, little angel as she was, would never live to be a woman ;"—out of the mother's hearing, of course ; but Mrs. Annesley, without their aid, was oppressed with fear. She used to urge the nurses to be cheerful. Toys were heaped upon her, and little possessions, a pony, dogs, birds, anything she had a fancy for. Still Miss Amy continued grave and quiet, thin and pale. At last some one suggested that a stout village girl to play with her might be better than companions of her own rank, who, indeed, were difficult to meet with. And the same bright-witted person having suggested that the village school

would furnish the required child, Mrs. Annesley, without loss of time, had proceeded there to make known her wants. She felt sure that she had only to make her choice, for no one in the village would be likely to refuse such an opening for their daughter.

"I must have a girl who is pleasant-looking, clean and healthy, and especially of a cheerful disposition," said the lady, upon which Miss Simms, looking round the school, called out six or seven names, and the owners of them came forward to be examined. Amongst the number was our old friend Lettice Moden, whose rosy face, and pleasant smile attracted Mrs. Annesley ; but there were two others of a more refined kind of prettiness, and she hesitated. "I wish you had shown me only one," said she ; "it is so annoying to have the trouble of choosing from all these."

Miss Simms looked puzzled ; was she then to make the decision ? No, that would be too great a responsibility. "Perhaps the young lady herself, ma'am," she began, with hesitation.

"Oh, yes, that will be the best plan," said Mrs. Annesley, relieved. "Let these three," pointing to them with her eye-glass, "come to the Hall at six this evening, and Miss Annesley herself shall decide. It is possible that she may not like any of them. Thank you. Good morning ;" and then the lady, much overcome by her exertions, retired from the school.

Great was the excitement in the three different houses that afternoon at tea-time, and, indeed, in several others, for the news soon spread, and those who had not been chosen were inclined to accuse Miss Simms of partiality, as well as to envy the girls who were. Lettice's mother,

who had a large family, and was rather borne down by the care of them, was very much pleased at the prospect, and helped to make Lettice as neat and clean as possible. The father was a woodman employed on the estate ; but they had always had their hands full with one thing and another, and Mrs. Moden felt very anxious lest Anne Taylor's new light print that she had worn only once on Sunday, might eclipse Lettice's more useful one, which, though quite clean now, thanks to her good management, had been washed many times before. The other mothers also adorned their daughters after their own fashion ; the girls all called for each other, and set off together across the fields to the Hall. They were not troubled with any fears until they reached the courtyard, and rang the servants' bell. Then the loud peal it gave alarmed their inexperience, and it was with some trepidation that they waited for its being answered. It was only a good-natured girl, not much older than themselves, however, who opened the door, and she saying, " Oh, you've come, have you ? " took them through some long passages into the housekeeper's room. Here a personage in black silk and a lace cap, not much less grand than my lady herself, was covering pots of jam. She told the girls they might sit down, and went on with her occupation ; she had soon finished, however, and then she turned to the girls, who stood up and curtsied at every word, and put them through a close catechism as to their names, ages, parents, and what they could do. They thought, perhaps, this was the lady who was to hire them ; but in the midst of this ordeal, a smart-looking maid came to inquire if three girls were there from the school. And seeing them she tossed her head, and telling them to follow her upstairs,

held the swing-door back rather scornfully for them to pass through into the other part of the house. Before turning to follow her up the private staircase, Lettice caught a glimpse of a large hall in the distance, with beautiful white statues, but there was no time for more than a glance. The lady's-maid tripped upstairs quickly, and they were soon in the nursery-gallery, and presently ushered into a large airy room, with a great bay window opposite the door, in which hung a square cage with some canaries in it. Below the cage was a stand holding some tiny plants in flower, and near to it a low table and a liliputian easy chair, and a small book-case with little books in it; the recess of the window, indeed, seemed furnished to match the size of the young lady, who was at present standing there, dressed in a simple holland dress, and her dark brown hair tied back with bright blue ribbons. As she stood gazing out of the bay window, her head, except in colour, might have belonged to one of the statues in the great hall downstairs, so like marble and so beautiful in its clear still outline. She held in her arms a small black spaniel, which she was dreamily caressing with one of her pretty hands; but when the village girls were shown into the room, the petted creature leaped out of the young lady's arms, and flew barking and snapping at the intruders. One of the girls, Ellen Walker, not used to be tender to animals, returned its attentions by a kick, which sent it back howling to its mistress. A faint flush spread over the young lady's cheek, and she went up to Ellen, and said, "You should not have kicked my poor Flosky; he meant no harm to you. Would you like to make friends with him?"

There were, however, two words to that bargain : Ellen might have been willing ; but the dog would do nothing but snarl.

In another part of the room, working at a table, Mrs. Atkins, the nurse, was sitting ; but she appeared to take no notice of what was passing, for this plan of her lady's had by no means met with her approval. "She know what young girls were," she had said to Mrs. Moss ; "up to all sorts of mischief, and she knew, too, who would have all the trouble : so she should not encourage the idea."

An inner door now opened, and Mrs. Annesley came in. Whilst the girls made their curtsies, the lady stooped down to kiss her little daughter.

"How is my pet this afternoon ? Has she seemed less languid, Atkins, do you think ?"

"Miss Amy enjoyed being out, ma'am," replied the nurse ; "but we did not venture further than the weeping ash—it was so hot."

"Quite right, Atkins," said Mrs. Annesley. "It is so warm, that I dread this dinner party at Shiels to-night."

"Are you going out again to-night, mamma, and papa, too ?" asked the child, hanging about the mother.

"Yes, my pet, but you shall have some nice dessert here. We will tell Moss to send you some ; what shall it be—pink cakes or peaches ?"

"I don't want any dessert, thank you, mamma," said the child. "It was you and papa, I wanted."

"Pretty pet," said Mrs. Annesley, caressing her. "But see, Amy darling, you are going to have a girl to play with you, to do just what you like, to pick up your ball,

and dress your dolls, and show you new games. One of these three. Choose, my pet; have which you like."

Miss Amy first carried Flosky to her nurse, and said, "Take care of him, please, he might fly at them again," and then she walked to a little distance, and looked at the girls with the gravity of a reviewing officer: any one might have laughed to see her; after which, without the least hesitation, she said, "That one with the yellow hair, and the eyes that laugh at me. I should like that girl best to play with me, dear mamma."

Mrs. Annesley put down the eyeglass through which she had been following her child's movements with a kind of languid amusement, and said, "Very well, my pet; the schoolmistress told me that any one of these was fit to come, so ask her name, Atkins, and tell her to come to-morrow. Moss must speak to her parents about wages and that kind of thing."

"Do let her stay now, mamma," said Miss Amy. "I should like her to dress my new doll to-night."

"Certainly, my pet. Send the other two girls home, Atkins, and keep that one. What is her name, do you say?"

"Lettice Moden, ma'am," replied the nurse, rather grimly.

"Dear, how funny!" said Mrs. Annesley, and with a kiss, and "good-bye, my pet," to her little daughter, the lady left the room.

But a most unexpected opposition now arose. Lettice all at once left the ranks, and going up to Mrs. Atkins, curtsied as if she had been Miss Simms, and said, "Please, m'm, I must go home now."

"Go home, child! what rubbish!" said Mrs. Atkins.

"Ain't you grateful to be chosen for such a place, instead of talking about your dirty home, indeed?"

"It's not dirty," said Lettice, flushing up. "My mother's the cleanest woman in the place; Mr. Price said so, and she said I was to make haste back, she wanted me: so I must go."

This was an unpromising beginning, and Mrs. Atkins's indignation at the impertinence of the village girl was about to burst out violently, when Miss Amy ran up to her, "Of course she must go home if her mother said so, dear nursey," she said. "Never mind about my doll. You will come in the morning and dress it for me, won't you, Lettice?"

"Yes, m'm, that I will," said Lettice, heartily; and Mrs. Atkins, muttering something about being only too glad to get rid of her for a time, called Susan, the stout nursery-maid, who was busy in an adjoining room, and sent her downstairs with the girls.

The delight was as great in the Moden household, as the disappointment in the two others, and Lettice was made much of that night, by all her brothers and sisters, who listened to her account of the Hall, and of the beautiful young lady, as if it had been a fairy tale. But Lettice had more to do than to talk. She had to help her mother with her preparations for her new place. Happily, Mrs. Moden was such a clean, tidy woman, that the few things Lettice did possess were in good order, and easily packed up; but there were, of course, some better frocks, and other clothes which would have to be procured afterwards, and great were the measurings and contrivings. There was not much money to depend upon either, for John Moden sometimes spent part of his week's

wages at the public-house, and thus they were sadly pinched at times ; but that made the prospects of Lettice's earning for herself the more welcome, and Mrs. Moden after tidying up, getting the children off to school, and putting the baby out to a neighbour's, dressed herself and went with Lettice to the Hall, to speak to the housekeeper herself about the arrangements. These were easily accomplished, for Mrs. Moss was a kind-hearted woman, and listened considerably to Mrs. Moden's account of her large family and difficulties, and as Mrs. Annesley had bid her be liberal, and Lettice was to be always well dressed, the terms agreed upon sent Mrs. Moden away with pride and happiness. " You'll be a good girl, honey, and don't be fretting after home now, for you've got a good start, and you must do for yourself," she said to Lettice, and feeling something like a mother bird, who has brought up her fledgling carefully, and then pushes it off the edge of the nest to fly alone, and come back no more, Mrs. Moden gave a gentle sigh, and returned to her washing-tub and her other children.

It was a strange new world for Lettice. In the morning she had been on her knees scouring the kitchen, Billy creeping about and getting into her way, Jane fighting with Billy, and her mother slapping them both, the father coming in, an easy sort of man, when he had had no liquor, to eat his frugal breakfast, and after that a great fuss, and washing of faces, and sending the children off to school. Hard work, noise, and carefulness. A few hours afterwards, and Lettice was walking beside Miss Amy on her pony, through a pretty glen in the park, where a bank covered now with ferns, and in spring with primroses, sloped down to a running stream,

and she was twining wild roses and honeysuckle into a wreath for the young lady's hat. She had enjoyed a good dinner, and the only work she had to look forward to to-day was the making of a frock of white tarlatane and pink ribbon for the new wax doll. Surely it was no wonder that the neighbours said Lettice was a lucky girl, and that she thought herself in Paradise.

To any one who has lived long enough to know that there is no such thing as Paradise upon earth, that every situation has some drawback, and that a peaceful mind is the only security for happiness, it will not be surprising that Lettice felt her little troubles even here. They principally arose from the fact that Mrs. Atkins had taken a violent prejudice against her from the first, and that Lettice did not bear the consequences patiently. The nurse thought everything she did was wrong, and was continually finding fault with her; and when Lettice replied, as she too often did, with sauciness, Mrs. Atkins punished her by depriving her of her meals, or making her sit to some long piece of sewing. These things made Miss Amy sad, and she used to plead so sweetly for Lettice, that it caused the girl to love her little lady the more dearly; but it only made Mrs. Atkins jealous. She had taken a wrong turn about Lettice; and although not a bad-hearted woman, and certainly an honest, faithful one, she was not fair to Lettice. Susan, the nursery-maid, in the beginning, followed Mrs. Atkins's lead, and was cross to her; but the first time she fell in with any blame from the head-nurse, she sided with Lettice, and in the end was a very bad companion for the young girl, putting her up to things, as she called it,—that was, suggesting ways of spiting Mrs. Atkins,—which only recoiled

upon Lettice's own head. It seemed strange that any such bad ways could go on in the little world where Miss Amy was, as it were, the queen; but she was unconscious of it all, except when she heard Atkins scold. The little girl always seemed as if she could not understand what was evil; and the charity that believes the best of every one, prevented her from being injured by the nursery cabals. Lettice's coming was not the only change about this time. When Lettice had been a few months at the Hall, there was a talk of having a governess for Miss Annesley; and Mrs. Atkins grew more sour than ever in her jealousy of a new interference with her charge. In the end, however, a pleasant arrangement was made. A quiet young lady, the daughter of a former rector, was glad to employ herself and earn some money, by coming for a few hours every day to the Hall to teach Miss Amy; and the rest of the day was still spent in her rambles and games with Lettice, under Mrs. Atkins's eye.

During these mornings it was that Lettice's struggles with the head-nurse generally took place; and many times she used to say to herself, "I wish I was back again at school;" but in the afternoon, when she was once more with Miss Amy, she used to change her mind; and on her few brief visits to her own home, she always told them that "she liked her place very well, and as for her young lady, she was the best and beautifullest that ever was seen."

Lettice called her good, but she did not fully understand her goodness, the heavenly purity that shone in all the actions of this little child. In the attention she received from every one round her, and the indulgences her parents showered on her, there was enough to make

her selfish and overbearing ; but, on the contrary, she was gentle and considerate, and very humble. Much as she had heard about good things at school, Lettice never thought of the real reason why Miss Amy was so good.

About nine months after Lettice went to Aston Hall, Miss Amy's eighth birthday came, and everybody was anxious to celebrate it as much as possible, and there was to be a large children's party in the afternoon. Lettice and Mrs. Atkins were on worse terms than usual, and Mrs. Atkins had declared that Lettice should not enter into the amusements at all ; and giving her a long piece of needlework, in which there were three seams, she told her to sit in the back nursery and finish it.

Lettice said, saucily, "You'll see ;" but she took the work and began with it. Meanwhile Miss Amy had gone to the breakfast-room. Flowers had greeted her opening eyes when she awakened, but other presents were now waiting for her. Six new story-books, all bound alike in blue and gold, from her mamma ; and a pearl necklace, with a curious clasp, from Mr. Annesley. Her godfather sent her a writing-desk, and there were besides some toys from other friends. Amy's eyes sparkled, as any little girl's would have done, and the parents said to each other, "How much stronger she has looked since that village girl came to play with her !"

"Do you like Lettice, my pet ?" asked her mother.

"Yes, mamma, very much," said Amy ; "but——"

"But what, my child ?"

"Only nursery does not like her ; she says Lettice must go away," said Amy, sadly.

"Not if you like her, my pet," said Mrs. Annesley.

"I do not want nurse to be grieved; I wish she would like Lettice," said Amy, looking puzzled.

"Do not distress yourself, darling," said her mother. "It is very funny, Atkins is so jealous of this girl, Robey tells me," she added to her husband. "If Amy had not been so fond of her, Atkins must have had her way about her. These people are so tiresome. Now, my pet," turning again to Amy, "what are you going to do to-day?"

"No governess on birthdays," said Mr. Annesley.

"No, papa. Miss Cox was so glad, because her brother is coming from school, and she was going to meet him," said Amy. "And, mamma, may I send my flowers to the cottage? Mrs. Cox would like them so much; for, you know, she lies always on the sofa, and they have scarcely any in their garden. And, mamma, may little Clara come to tea? She never goes to any parties scarcely, and she is such a nice little girl."

"Anything my pet likes," said Mrs. Annesley; "but we will tell the gardener to send other flowers, darling; not yours."

Amy considered a moment, and then she said, "I think I should like to send mine, mamma; they are the very best, nurse said so." And, of course, even in this she had her own way.

Then little Clara's coming was discussed, and by her father's help it was arranged that when Amy took a drive in the afternoon with her mamma, they should call for the little girl; and a message with the flowers was sent to that effect. For the rest, Miss Amy chose to have a long ride on her pony with Lettice, and her groom; and then, to her delight, her father promised to go with her

to the ruins of an old abbey, which stood about a mile beyond the boundaries of the park. When Miss Amy went back to the nursery, she announced her plans.

"I am sorry, my dear," said Mrs. Atkins, "that Lettice can't go with you; but Susan will do very well. Lettice will behave better another day, if she is kept in now."

"Nurse knows best," thought Miss Amy, although much disappointed, and she quietly allowed herself to be dressed for her ride. Lettice meanwhile had been having some talk with Susan, and having learned the state of things, she coolly put away her work, got herself ready, and came forward to attend her young mistress.

"What are you doing here?" cried Mrs. Atkins, in a rage.

"Miss Amy wished me to go out with her," said Lettice, quite demurely, but with a saucy twinkle in her eye.

"You impertinent young monkey," the nurse was beginning, when Mrs. Annesley came into the nursery from her own apartments, and said in her languid way, "Papa is waiting for you, my pet. The gentleman who was coming this morning is delayed, so papa can go with you directly. How insufferably hot this room is, Atkins."

"Delightful, delightful, mamma!" cried Amy, clapping her hands. "Make haste and tie my handkerchief, please, nurse, that I may not keep papa a moment."

Mrs. Annesley smiled to see the bright colour on her darling's cheeks, and the animation in her dark eyes, and being reminded of Lettice, to whom she thought it was partly owing, she turned to where the neat country girl stood in a respectful attitude, and said, "You go with Miss Amy."

"Yes, ma'am," said Lettice, very demurely ; and then Mrs. Atkins's anger was out of bounds, and she cried,—

"You would not believe, ma'am, that that girl, as she stands so deceitful, is the sauciest, most troublesome girl I ever met with. I can do nothing with her, and I much doubt whether it is proper she should be about Miss Amy."

Mrs. Annesley put up her eye-glass, and looked from one to the other — Atkins, hot and cross ; Lettice, feeling she had the better of it, but pretending to be quite injured ; Miss Amy grieved and puzzled.

"Atkins," she said, "I wish you would not be so violent. We cannot suffer it. Amy, my pet, come with me ; of course you take Lettice, if you like. Pray, Atkins, do not let me have such a scene again ;" and taking out her vinaigrette, Mrs. Annesley took hold of Amy's hand, and led her out of the nursery.

No sooner had they disappeared than Mrs. Atkins burst out into a fit of rage. Either she or Lettice must leave the house ; she could not remain with such a good-for-nothing girl, it was impossible, and she loaded her with invectives. Lettice, thoroughly roused, replied with all the sauciness her own passion could suggest ; and the nurse, further irritated by the fact of Susan passing through the room at that moment, with rather a doubtful smile upon her lips, could not keep her hands off the girl, as she afterwards expressed it, and she was boxing her ears violently, when the door opened, and Miss Amy stood aghast at the entrance of the room. Her mamma had taken her downstairs to the drawing-room, and was just about to amuse her with one of her new story-books until her papa was ready, when she said, "Oh, mamma,

poor nursey, she looked so grieved ; I should like to run up and speak to her. I wish she would be kind to poor Lettice. She is always kind to me." And before Mrs. Annesley could express her annoyance at the whole affair, Amy had run upstairs again, and became witness to a scene of violence such as she had never imagined. When Atkins saw her young lady, she calmed down at once, and said, "Come, here, my dear, and don't look at that naughty girl ; go out riding with your papa, and never mind such people as she."

Miss Amy looked from one to the other. "I only came back to kiss you, nursey," she said. "Oh, do be kind to Lettice ;" and then her eyes began to overflow with tears.

"Never mind me, Miss Amy," said Lettice ; "I don't want such as she to be kind to me ;" and with a great flounce, she walked off to smooth her ruffled collar and bonnet, that she might be ready for the expedition she still intended to make.

As soon as the nurse saw Miss Amy's sorrow, the child whom they all tried to shield from everything that could be disagreeable, she began somewhat to regret her own share in causing it ; and Miss Amy's caresses only making her worse, she sat down in her easy chair, and wringing her hands, she lamented that she should ever have caused her darling a moment's pain.

"I am only so sorry, nurse," said Miss Amy. "If Lettice was good again, and asked you to forgive her, you would be kind to her, would you not ? and I will not take her out. I will ask mamma not to wish her to go with me."

Now Mrs. Atkins had no desire that any more should be said about the matter downstairs, so she replied, "No,

no, my dear, let the girl go with you ; the less she is in my sight the better : so think no more about it, and go and enjoy your ride with your papa, my dear."

At this moment, Susan brought a message that her master was waiting for Miss Annesley : so Lettice was called, and they went.

Mr. Annesley noticed the traces of tears upon his little girl's cheeks, as he himself lifted her carefully into the saddle ; but he was not a man who ever interfered with nursery matters, and rarely showed his affection for Amy as much as he was doing now, so he made no inquiries. He walked beside her pony, listening to her happy talk, and sometimes gathering her flowers, and telling her about their names and peculiarities,—for he spent much time in the pursuit of natural history,—until they arrived at the old abbey, where he lifted her from her pony, and left her to amuse herself amongst the ruins with Lettice, until he should have paid a visit to the owner, a gentleman who lived close by.

"Eh ! this is a pretty place, Miss Amy," said Lettice, as they strolled about, looking at the old arches, peeping into dark cells, and gazing up at the high walls, covered with clustering ivy. "Couldn't we get up that staircase ? It is broken away a little, but I could lift you over that part, and we might come out on the top of that wall. See, it's like a small church-tower."

"Papa said we were not to climb," said Miss Amy. "Let us sit down awhile on this large piece of stone. It is like a rock. I am very tired, Lettice."

"Are you, Miss Amy ? I can't say I ever feel tired, except with sewing. That gives me a pain in my side, sometimes ; but little she cares for that."

"Do you mean nurse?" said Miss Amy. "Oh, Lettice, why were you so naughty? Nurse cried. I never saw her cry before."

"Well, Miss, I think it was I had more need to have cried. She treated me shocking. She is a dreadful woman, she is. I shall never be able to bear her again, I know; but I'll pay her off somehow."

"Oh, Lettice, that is not right," said Miss Amy, quite distressed.

"Well now, Miss Amy, look here. You know she told me to clean out the bird-cage, which I am sure is Susan's work; however, I wasn't going to let your birds want seed and water, so I was doing all for them, when she began to make an uproar, and say I hadn't made my own bed; so I told her that two things at once were more than two hands could do that were not as clever as her own: so she said she would fix my hands, and she set me down to a piece of sewing that would keep me till to-morrow, and she said I should have no dinner till I'd finished it. I'm sure I'd a good mind to run away home, only mother was so pleased when I got the place, and I should very likely get no character. It is hard upon poor girls."

"Poor Lettice, I am so sorry," said Miss Amy. "Do not go away, Lettice. I will try to make nursey kind to you. I should not like you to go, Lettice."

"No, Miss, and that was one thing made me put up with her. I shouldn't like to leave you, Miss Amy."

"Thank you, Lettice," said Miss Amy; "but still nurse says you were naughty; will you ask her to forgive you, and then I am sure she will be kind to you?"

"No, Miss Amy, not when I've done nothing," replied

Lettice. "I've more spirit than that, I hope. I shouldn't mind so much, if she hadn't plainly taken a spite against me ; Susan says so."

All this might have been very bad for Miss Amy ; she might have learnt to be rude and saucy and unsubmitive. Many little girls would have been injured by having a companion like Lettice, but it did Miss Amy no harm ; evil did not come near her, except to make her sad.

Again she begged Lettice to ask nurse to forgive her, but whilst she was making the vain attempt, Mr. Annesley came back to them, accompanied by Mr. Dashwood, the gentleman who was the owner of the Abbey. He had wanted them all to go into his house, because he thought a thunder-storm was near, but Mr. Annesley said it had been threatening for two days, and would not come yet ; he determined, however, to take the shortest road home lest Mrs. Annesley should be uneasy. So they took a short cut across some fields, rough work for the pony and the walkers, but amusing for Amy, and they entered the park in an unfrequented part by a gate that was rarely used.

The gate was scarcely closed behind them, when some heavy drops began to fall, and then, without any more warning, the rain came down in sheets, and they had no umbrellas or protection of any sort. There was no shelter near, and there seemed nothing for it but being drenched. There were few trees either, except a large oak at some little distance ; and to this Mr. Annesley directed their steps, urging the half-blinded pony on, and themselves running to keep up with it. They were *pleased* to find that the oak was hollow, and would

shelter two of them completely ; so Lettice and Amy and the side-saddle were put in there, and Mr. Annesley, the groom, and pony sheltered as well as they could outside.

They had not been there three minutes, enjoying the smugness of their new abode, when a sudden flash of lightning came across the opening, and a peal of rolling crackling thunder followed almost immediately. Lettice gave a little scream.

"Oh, Miss Amy," she cried, "I am so frightened."

"Why, Lettice?" said Miss Amy. "God will not let the thunder hurt us. The angels will be near. Nothing can harm us when the angels are near."

Another flash came, and Lettice trembled.

"Oh, Miss Amy," she said, "I wish I hadn't had that rumpus with nurse. Oh, dear! dear! I am so frightened," and as she spoke the thunder crashed again, and she crouched herself up in a corner of the tree, the picture of fright and misery. Again was Lettice a very bad companion for Miss Amy, but the child was secure in her simple faith, "God would take care of her," so she feared no evil.

But now Mr. Annesley, who was very uneasy about his little girl, thought that perhaps the rain was a less danger than remaining in the tree, so he brought her out again, put her on her pony, and wrapping his own coat round her, he hurried them on through the storm, with rain beating in their faces, lightning flashing, and thunder rolling, as quickly as possible, towards the Hall.

By the time they had come in sight of home, the fury of the tempest had abated, and when they reached the portico, and Mr. Annesley put his arms round his little daughter to lift her down, a bright gleam of sunshine

glanced across her face, and shone upon the drops that hung from her hair.

Her smile was as bright as the sunshine, as she put her arms too round her father's neck, and said, "Thank you, dear papa, for sheltering me;" and perhaps never had he felt his child so dear to him as at that moment.

In five minutes more, she was in Mrs. Atkins's care, being patted, dried and doctored; Mrs. Annesley herself crossed into superintending the active measures that were being used to prevent Miss Amy from taking cold.

So completely was all attention centred on the child that but little notice was taken of the others, who had suffered equally from the storm; and Lettice, thoughtless as any young girl could be, contented herself with only changing the upper part of her clothing, and then appeared as usual in the nursery.

As soon as Mrs. Atkins could spare a moment from her charge, and caught sight of her, she ordered her back again to her sewing, and Lettice obeyed her; but as she subsided away, her mind was wholly bent upon the contrivance of some scheme that should revenge herself upon her grand.

As she was considering, Robey, the lady's maid, came into the room, holding a cap daintily in her hand. "Where is Mrs. Atkins?" said she.

"With Miss Amy," answered Lettice, throwing herself back and stretching her arms out, as if very weary, and at the same time losing her needle, which took her some minutes to find again.

"Then give her this child, will you, when she comes," said Robey. "Be very careful of it. The good lady wished to be spruce to-night, and I think I have suc-

ceeded in making her so ; " and after viewing her handiwork with much pride, Robey laid the cap most carefully on the chest of drawers, and withdrew to her work-room again.

The cap was tastefully made of white and black blonde, black velvet, and white ribbons. Robey pretended to laugh at Mrs. Atkins's weakness for pretty caps, but they were good friends, nevertheless, and the lady's maid very often spent a little leisure time in helping Atkins to be smart upon occasions.

"An old scarecrow," said Lettice to herself, after she had found her needle. "What business has she to wear such fine caps? I think I could fix her nicely. I wonder where Flosky is? Perhaps he would like to wear it first," and leaving her work, Lettice went into the large empty nursery, and called "Flosky, Flosky," though in rather a low tone.

The dog was accustomed to play with Lettice; it was but a puppy, and Miss Amy often laughed merrily at its playful growling and tearing at anything Lettice threw for its amusement. Mrs. Atkins did not encourage the sport, for the dog once played this game upon a cambric pocket handkerchief; but her disapproval only made Lettice the more determined to encourage it.

Flosky pricked up his ears, ready for some fun, and was easily deluded into the back nursery, and worked up into the necessary state of excitement.

"Now, would you like a nice new lace cap, Flosky?" said she, and holding Robey's handiwork up to him, the dog soon seized it, growled, tore it, ran about the room with the now shapeless heap, and finally, by Lettice's directions, buried it in a closet. She then locked the

door, and returned to her sewing, which, however, was rather less endurable than ever, for her hands were very hot, she bent the needle, and her thread got into knots continually.

In a few minutes, she heard Susan come up-stairs, and a sort of feeling of having had a lucky escape of discovery came into her head ; but she did not care much, she was too reckless just now to care for anything.

"I have been ironing out the old lady's best collar," said Susan ; "and now I am going to put out her best black silk to air ; she certainly means to make herself a great swell to-night."

"She's got plenty of people to wait on her, at least," said Lettice, scornfully ; but Susan had already passed on to the nurse's room to get the dress.

A short time afterwards, Mrs. Atkins came back into the nursery, and called to Lettice ; it was to bring out of her room, where there was a linen press, a napkin she wanted to spread over a small tray. Of course, Lettice could not find it easily, she had generally no eyes to see what Mrs. Atkins wanted, so nurse came herself, with the basin of beef-tea on the tray, to assist in the search. The napkin was found, and Lettice flung to the wardrobe doors again, but in doing so, whether accidentally or not, the corner hit Mrs. Atkins's elbow, and the contents of the cup were poured over her silk gown, which was lying where Susan had just left it on a chair.

"Oh, dear," cried Lettice, almost frightened at the mischief she had done, and half expecting to feel the weight of nurse's hand upon her cheek again ; but, to her great surprise, Mrs. Atkins only said, rather gravely—"I hope, Lettice, you did not do that on purpose ;" and merely

waiting to take up the dress and give it a slight shake, she called Susan, and asked her to be so kind as to clean it for her, and then she hastened away to get some more beef-tea. Lettice was taken aback, not to say disappointed. There was little fun or revenge in this, and to Susan's exclamations and inquiries she answered shortly, and a strange feeling of foreboding took possession of her. She had a headache too, and shivered, new sensations for her, so healthy as she had always been ; and she asked Susan for another needle, and sat down and sewed diligently, as if she would like to make up now for the large, dirty stitches that had gone before.

Miss Amy did not get up until after her mamma had had her luncheon ; Nurse would fain have had her lie still longer, or at least remain quietly in the nursery, "getting the amusements ready for your little friends, my dear ;" but Mrs. Annesley, so uneasy herself that she could not bear to suspect nurse's fears, eagerly believed Amy's assurances that she was well and not the least tired : so they took their drive together, called for little Clara Cox, and brought her back to spend the evening.

When they returned, nurse was dressed in her ordinary brown silk, and the cap she wore on Sundays. She kissed Amy tenderly when she came in, but looked grave and harassed—not like a birthday, as the little lady told her. At this, nurse only smiled and did not explain, and it was from the chattering Susan that the young lady learnt the calamity that had strangely befallen both the cap and gown. That Flosky could have committed such an enormity was very grievous, and Miss Amy took him up in her arms and scolded him, until the dog looked up at her with wondering eyes.

"But how could Flosky get the cap?" asked his mistress, anxious to defend her favourite.

"Well, miss, nobody knows," said Susan; "and Lettice, she only says she is not keeper of the caps, and there's no more to be got out of her."

Why they should bring Lettice in at all puzzled Miss Amy; however, she ran to comfort "nursey," and to promise her the nicest cap that ever was seen, which she intended to ask her papa to let her buy to-morrow out of her own money. Mrs. Atkins took it all very quietly, and proceeded to dress the young lady in the white tulle dress and wreath of little rosebuds that had been provided for the occasion. This was pretty enough to delight the child, who had a taste for everything that was beautiful, but she would fain have had Clara equally well dressed. The very plain and often washed white frock seemed to need some ornament, and she was not satisfied until she and Lettice, between them, had contrived a wreath of small pink flowers, out of a new bouquet that the gardener had sent to her, which turned out even prettier than her own.

Mrs. Atkins and Lettice both accompanied the little girls downstairs. Here Mrs. Annesley, richly dressed in pale blue silk, reclined on a couch at one end of the saloon, and watched the arrival of troop after troop of little girls and boys—some with a governess, some with an elder sister to take care of them—and were presented to her with almost as much solemnity as if she had been the Queen. But that ceremony once over, there was nothing but freedom and enjoyment for the little guests.

A band of musicians was placed in the gallery, and dancing and games of all kinds followed each other. In

the games, Lettice was quite the manager, her own cheeks glowing with excitement and delight at the novel scene. Miss Amy was happy too, except that she was tired all the time, and that her papa did not come to dance with her as he had promised; however, when she was told that he had caught a little cold, and might have made it worse by entering the hot saloon, she tried to think no more of her disappointment, but moved about among her guests—making peace where there was any jar, and using her power as Queen of the Feast, not to show her own importance, but to make the others happy,—with a tact and skill far beyond her years. Lettice saw it all with her quick, discerning eyes, and she marvelled at her.

A magnificent supper finished the entertainment, and at ten o'clock the carriages were brought round, and the little visitors dispersed—the last time that, for many a day, the sound of merriment was heard in Aston Hall. With the last carriage a dog-cart drove from the house conveying a special messenger to bring the village doctor for the master, who was lying very ill. His constitution was not good, and the heating walk through the pouring rain, without his coat, had told upon him directly, and he was already suffering from inflammation of the lungs.

By the next morning the forebodings of the nurse were quite justified. Lettice was feverish with a sore throat, Miss Amy was weak and tired, and Mr. Annesley was pronounced to be in the greatest danger. The scarlet fever had been for the last month in the village, and it was no wonder that, with the exciting cause of a thorough chill, Lettice and Miss Amy should both begin with it. As soon as Lettice showed any symptoms, the housekeeper would have had her removed to a distant part of the

house and her mother brought to wait upon her, but Mrs. Atkins demurred—it would be taking it into another family, she said, and there was no need, for she would nurse her—and as Miss Amy began next day there was no necessity; nurse and Susan attended to them both with unwearied care, whilst Mrs. Annesley—distracted with her troubles, thoroughly aroused, but rendered helpless by long habits of inaction—went from her child's sick-room to that of her husband in the most restless state of misery.

It was a dreadful condition that the whole household was thrown into at once. Fortunately the servants were honest and capable, and devoted to their master and the young lady; and in their different departments Mrs. Moss and Atkins were invaluable. Atkins had the worst of it, for both Lettice and Miss Amy required her continually. The fever with Lettice ran very high, she was often delirious, and then she was incessantly calling upon Flosky to give up the cap, and upon nurse to forgive her. Mrs. Atkins used to wipe the tears away and say to Susan—“It's astonishing how girls will let themselves be led on to do bad things, when in their hearts they mean no harm;” and sometimes with Lettice, as weak and helpless as a baby, lying before her, she would say—“I was a little too hard upon her, I dare say. Well, well, we'll see—if she was only better, poor thing.” And the good woman's patience with her when she was unreasonable and fidgety, as invalids will so often be, was wonderful. Lettice never forgot it, and never ceased to be grateful.

As for Miss Amy, she was quiet and patient all the time, too weak to know or care much about anything, *sometimes* asking piteously for her father, and then

sinking into a doze again. And the father, he was dying : they had the best doctors that could be found ; but no skill could save him. In about ten days the neighbourhood was shocked to hear that Mr. Annesley was dead, and the last time that he had pressed his beloved child to his arms was on that day, when he had unwittingly caused his own death by stripping off his coat to shelter her. Little Amy remembered this well, and if anything had been needed to strengthen her loving recollection of her father, it was this incident, of which she often spoke in after years. As for herself, she recovered so far as to be able to comfort and even to cheer her mother, who, at first, gave herself up to the most helpless, hopeless grief ; but Miss Amy was never even as strong again as she had been before, and scarcely any one dared to hope that she would live to enjoy her rich inheritance. She was, however, being fitted for a richer one ; day by day she seemed to grow more free from faults and infirmities, more gentle, more patient, and more filled with understanding of heavenly things.

When she was about fourteen they took her to the southern coast for the autumn months, intending to go abroad afterwards ; at least, Mrs. Annesley did, no one else saw much prospect of it. Lettice was with her, her faithful Lettice, now grown a fine young woman of twenty-one. She had been Miss Amy's principal attendant for some time, for Atkins had gone two years before, had actually left her beloved nurseling, to marry a farmer in the neighbourhood, a man to whom she had been attached for many years. Before she left, she had paid the highest compliment to the girl she used to dislike so much, by saying to Miss Amy, " You can spare me

now, my love, or else Denman should have waited another twenty years ; but, you see, when he was quite a boy I promised him, if he ever got a farm, to marry him : so I can't break my promise, Lettice being grown so thoughtful now, that I can well leave you with her."

So Susan having gone long before, Miss Amy and Lettice were left together, and with Mrs. Annesley—who, however, very rarely left the house—were staying at the sea-side. It was a happy time for both of them, and one might have thought sickness and death far away, as Miss Amy, with a delicate colour on her transparent cheek, calm and contented, lay on her carriage-couch near the sea, whilst Lettice, always near, read to her, or to amuse her pointed out the people on the beach, or else sat listening whilst her young mistress talked, drawing holy thoughts out of everything. Her powers of enjoyment rarely failed.

"How beautiful the sea is this morning, Lettice. Look at the green waves turning over, as if they would roll on for ever ; but God has set bounds to the sea. His power is greater than that of the ocean. Men go to the sea in ships, and storms arise, and they are afraid ; but they forget that God holds the waters in His hand. They cannot be overwhelmed unless it is His will. When trouble comes upon us, it is like deep waters rolling over us ; but there is always the Rock, higher than the troubles, for us to rest upon."

Her great trouble, poor child, sprang from her mother, who desired to keep her from all trouble. It was that she did not enter into these thoughts, and that however Amy might make excuses for her vain frivolity, and say that her health needed change and amusement,

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Amy and Lettice at the sea side.—F. 316.





Amy and Lettice at the sea side.—P. 318.

she could not shut her eyes to the fact that things eternal had small share in her mother's interest ; and Amy's daily prayer was that when that great trouble, her own death, should come, her mother might be able to hide herself in the Rock of Refuge. To Lettice she could talk about this fast-coming time quite calmly. One evening, as they sat on the hills near their house, they could see the sun setting behind a distant promontory. It was sinking like a globe of fire, and the sky above and around was breaking into the most glorious colours, almost too bright to look upon, but changing every instant. Amy watched it in a sort of ecstasy, and as she watched she said, " Look, Lettice, look, we have seen that ; but eye hath not seen the glories of heaven. Oh ! the great love that has provided such good things for us. What can we do in return for this great love ? Nothing. Nothing. God asks nothing for us but to do His will, to do what He tells us, to bear what He sends. Lettice, I want you to promise not to fret for me. You have been very kind to me always, and a great comfort ; when I have been tedious, you have been so patient, no one else would have done for me all that you have done."

" Miss Amy, Miss Amy, please do not talk that way," cried Lettice. " How can I do without you ? What shall I be without you ? Perhaps I shall get wild again, as I was when I first came to Aston, and then, oh, then, I shall never see you again."

" Hush, Lettice," said her mistress, and an expression of pain crossed her placid features ; " you must not distrust the love of God. He will keep you, only trust in Him. I have had so few trials, it seems as if I were unfit to speak of a rough world, such as they say it is."

Sometimes I have felt almost afraid to think how little real tribulation I have had ; and yet," here she covered her face with her shadowy hand, "and yet, I have had sorrow ; but the Lord has been so near to me. Oh, Lettice, the love of Jesus is beyond words to speak, none but words from the Bible will speak it, how He watcheth over us, knoweth our temptations, pitieth us. Greater love hath no man than His. Only, to know it, we must give Him our hearts. How can we expect to know Him, if we will not receive Him who is always ready in His great mercy to dwell with us ? Oh, Lettice, keep close to Him in trial, in temptation, in sorrow, and in joy ; and in looking forward to the long life you may have here after I am gone, fear nothing, so that you can only do His will."

One wish Miss Amy had, to go back to Aston, to see her home once more ; but this was not granted her, and as soon as she found it was not likely that she could bear the journey, she gave it up, and all her fading hours were spent in preparation for her change, and in trying to reconcile her mother to her loss.

Another week or two, and then Miss Amy went. On a bright evening in September it was, when all was peaceful round as befitted such an end. She lay calmly sinking, her lovely features chiselled as if in ivory on the pillow. Sometimes Lettice said a verse she knew she liked, and a gleam of pleasure crossed her face. Sitting close beside her, with her hand in hers, sat the poor mother, who had nothing else but her child.

"Mamma," whispered Amy, and the deep-set mouth relaxed, and the ear bent down to listen eagerly. "Mamma,

ou let the Lord Jesus comfort you ? He is all in all unto Him."

ain and again she asked it, and at last the mother
her knees, and clasped her hands together for all

was enough, and with the name of her Lord upon
ps, Miss Amy passed away.

"So giveth He His beloved sleep."

Agnes Allan.

"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God."

"In souls that discord maketh dark,
Dost Thou rekindle Love's bright spark,
And make them one again."—LYRA GERMANICA.

I CANNOT bear it, mother," said a young girl's voice, full of sorrow,—not passionate sorrow, but calm, almost despair.

"Poor child, poor Agnes," said the mother, stroking the dark head. "Be brave. We have long known that we must part. By God's mercy, it has not come suddenly, and God will make you able to bear it."

Still Agnes only wept, and laid her head on her mother's knee. She could not bear the thought of her mother's death just yet.

Mrs. Allan was the daughter of a Yorkshire farmer. When she was young she had come up to London to pay a long visit to some Yorkshire friends, who were settled in the great city, and had made there what was considered a good match for her. At any rate, it was a love-match, and nothing during the few years that Mrs. Allan and her husband lived together occurred to tarnish their happiness, except the death of their first child in infancy. Another child, a girl, was however born after

the lapse of four years, and they had just begun to watch with delight the budding intelligence of their little daughter, when an epidemic suddenly carried off the husband, and left Mrs. Allan a prey to the same disease, and scarcely with a wish to live. The little Agnes was not, however, then left motherless ; Mrs. Allan recovered, and was able to rouse herself to consider what was best now to be done for herself and the child. At first she naturally thought of returning to her native county, but the offer of the place of housekeeper to the institution in which her husband had held a situation of trust for years decided her, and she remained in London, living a monotonous but not uncomfortable life, and with but one earthly object, the welfare of her child.

But her health had never recovered the shock she had received. For seven years she had contrived, by dint of great carefulness, to send Agnes to an excellent day-school, where the girl had amply profited by her advantages ; but for the last nine months Mrs. Allan had been obliged to keep her at home, both as a nurse for herself, and as her substitute in the light duties of her situation.

During this time her health had been failing rapidly ; the organic disease from which she had suffered for years had so progressed that the kind and excellent physician who had for a long time attended her, thought it necessary to tell her that her days were numbered. Mrs. Allan received the announcement without repining or affright. Her whole life, since her husband's death, might have been called one of preparation for her own end, and, except for Agnes' sake, she had no desire to tarry longer. But this was a bitter exception. To leave

her Agnes, so young and gentle, a stranger in the world, could not at first be thought of without a severe pang. Not that she was friendless ; for Agnes, wherever she went, found some one to love her. Of a singularly calm and thoughtful disposition, she made many and lost no friends.

At school this temper made her the favourite of both governess and girls, and in all disputes it was natural to refer to her as arbiter. She was never carried away by passion or prejudice, and had great skill in seizing and bringing forth a point of union ; and it was curious sometimes at school to see how, when the wild spirits and rude manners of some of the girls had provoked a war of noisy words, and angry passions were making a serious quarrel out of the veriest trifle, the appearance of Agnes Allan on the scene would tend to soothe the most violent, and a few words from her rarely failed to reduce them all to reason.

But these friends were chiefly for fair weather, not for the dark days of trouble—and it was not amongst such as these that Agnes must seek her future home. Mrs. Allan had two brothers, and what so natural as that they should take charge of her daughter ? There was nothing in that prospect, surely, to make her sad. But they were both complete strangers to Agnes. Mrs. Allan herself had not seen them for years, and their wives never since she remembered them as almost children in the neighbourhood ; and, besides that, an unhappy coolness had sprung up amongst them years ago, that had never been removed. Some time after Mrs. Allan's marriage her father had died, and had left to each of his sons a half of his large farm, and to her some money. The money was not paid

without some decided steps on Mr. Allan's part, and the sons quarrelled about the landed property. Ralph considered Joshua's half so much the better because the family house stood upon it, whilst his own had only the cottage of a hind ; on the other hand, Joshua considered himself entitled to a large pasture to which Ralph laid claim, and after disputing for some time, Ralph was obliged to give it up, but never forgave his brother : the disputed field was almost within sight of his door, and whenever he was in a bad humour he had but to look in that direction, and a subject was found for him to vent it on. To improve matters, their wives did not agree, and every little disagreeable that occurred was turned to the best account by them.

Sheep would stray ; workmen dismissed from one farm would go and offer themselves at the other ; careless neighbours would repeat speeches that had really not been meant to be transferred ; and thus, piled up like a Highland cairn, the ill-will had grown until the brothers did not speak, and there was no willing intercourse between them. One of the wives was silly, the other was said to be capable but overbearing ; neither of them had ever shown any kindly feeling towards the widowed sister-in-law. No wonder, therefore, that Mrs. Allan shrank from the necessity of placing her gentle, refined Agnes in their care. But it must be done, and it was the talking about writing to them, and the certainty of her mother's approaching dissolution being thus brought before her, that wrung from Agnes the bitter cry, "I cannot bear it, mother."

She calmed down, however, after that. The mother herself took upon her the task of preparing her for the

inevitable separation, until Agnes saw that she must indeed try to submit herself to the will of God.

Then the letter, thought over and prayed over, was painfully written.

"It must be to Uncle Joshua, my dear, you see," her mother had said, "for he is the eldest, and your natural guardian, but you must not for that neglect your uncle Ralph. If it be possible, you must often see him and your cousins ; and if you find that it is objected to, do all in your power, as far as agrees with your duty towards God and to the uncle who will be placed over you, to bring about them such peace as there should be between brothers."

"How can I, mother?" asked Agnes. "Perhaps they will none of them like me."

"They will in time, my child, if not at first," said Mrs. Allan ; "and you will be patient, and wait for the good time, Agnes ? I have made it a special request that you may be allowed to see Ralph sometimes—and I have mentioned, too, that you will not go to them penniless. It is a great comfort to me, my dear, that we have been able to save a little all these years, and the gentlemen helping me to invest it so well ; you see you will have what may be a consideration to your uncle, for I have placed the income in his hands till you are of age. Mr. Harley will settle all that with him. I have in my memory the thought of your uncles Joshua and Ralph as two little boys. I can see my father coming home from market, and the boys running to the first gate to meet him, and my father taking both before him on the horse and trotting them up to the house, where I was *helping* to prepare the tea. It seems strange that they

should be so separated now. May God bring them together again in His own good time ! ”

After this they often talked about the Yorkshire home, and Mrs. Allan so far succeeded as to make Agnes think she should like to go there if she could take her mother too ; but that would never be, she was failing rapidly, and before the tardy answer to the letter came she had died suddenly—in the end, a mercy, perhaps, to both of them.

And Agnes had no relation near her, and she had said she could not bear it. She did not know till then how much a woman, even a very young one, can endure. The friends who came to help her were surprised to see “ how well she bore it,” as they said ; but they did not know the way in which the mother had striven to prepare her for this trial, nor how Agnes herself, with a full belief that she and this beloved mother were only separated for a time, had resolved bravely, by God’s help, to fulfil that dear mother’s wishes. Before Joshua Ingilby had made up his mind how to reply to his sister’s letter, another came in a black-edged envelope, directed in a clear hand, that bore some resemblance to Mrs. Allan’s, but was broader and more forcible.

“ My dear Uncle,” it began, “ I write to tell you that my mother is dead. She left me at ten minutes past six last night. It was sudden at last, though she has been long expecting it. My mother wished me to come to you, and to pay you the duty of a daughter. Now that she is here no longer, I have no pleasure but in doing what she wished. If you can let me live with you I shall be glad to know soon and I shall be ready at any time you choose.

At present, a kind friend, Mary Phipps, is with me, and she will stay until we hear from you.

“I remain, my dear Uncle,

“Your sorrowful niece,

“AGNES ALLAN.”

The first of this had been easy to write, but when Agnes came to “If you can let me live with you,” the possibility of a refusal struck a cold chill through her heart, and she began to wonder what she should do in case of it. Several of her girl friends had said—“Stay with us, Agnes; don’t go into that cold, bleak north;” and one girl had entreated her to come at once—“My father says I want a companion, he is rich; live with us.” But Agnes had turned away from these delusive words, and it was only now that she began to see that she might be obliged to choose an alternative—supposing that her own relations would not receive her. And the answer was so long in coming; it was not till after the funeral, when people who offered nothing had begun to say, “And what do you mean to do now, Miss Allan?”—that the letter, with the Yorkshire postmark, came which was to fix her destiny. It was old-fashioned in every way, much education had not been in vogue in Joshua’s boyish days, people’s wits were left a good deal to sharpen themselves—and very well it answered in some cases. The letter was written in a round, laboured hand.

“Dear Niece,—I duly received yours of the 20th inst, and I regret to hear the melancholy news of sister Allan’s death. It is with much pleasure that I agree that you should live here, as I make no doubt you have been

taught to make yourself useful, and your aunt wants some one to help her in many respects. You must set off by the government train on Thursday morning, and we will meet you at S—— Poor sister Allan said there was some one she could trust to see about the money out at interest. Give my direction to him, and say I will communicate with him upon the subject. He will see, I suppose, about your furniture, as your mother said she meant to leave him in the management of all. You must, however, look out to see you are not cheated, and mind they do not pick your pocket as you come to the railway. So no more from your affectionate uncle,

“JOSHUA INGILBY.”

Now that the consent had come which she had so much wished for, then the other side presented itself, and Agnes began to dread parting from all those she had known for years, and more especially she shrank from leaving the churchyard, surrounded by human dwellings, but still and quiet, in which she had laid all that had remained to her of her mother; but the day her uncle had fixed was the next but one. She had pledged herself to go when he should send for her; and although she had nearly all her properties packed up already, there were many things to see about, which could only be done when she knew for certain where she had to go to. She was, therefore, so full of business that she had no time to grieve until after she had kissed her faithful Mary Phipps at the railway station, and shaken hands with the friend to whom her uncle had alluded, Mr. Morison, an old lawyer, who had always been Mrs. Allan's adviser and true friend, and who now, at the cost of some time and trouble,

had come to see the young girl safely off on her journey to her unknown relatives ; not until then did Agnes feel how desolate she was. Mr. Morison had put her under the protection of a respectable-looking old woman, whom he found was travelling as far as York ; but Agnes cried behind her black crape veil for hours, and all the groans of sympathy and the offers of gingerbread of her companion were unheeded, until at last she heard the welcome news, "We are in Yorkshire now, my dear." Then she did try to rouse herself up. Most south-country folks seem to think that Yorkshire lies in a nut-shell, and have no idea of its extent, and the variety in its scenery and inhabitants ; so with Agnes, she thought once in Yorkshire, she was at her journey's end, and she was surprised to find on her arrival at York that she had still five hours to travel. She was roused, however, and exerting herself to put aside the remainder of her sorrow, she watched the strange wild country that she soon began to pass through, with some interest. The light of a summer's evening had not yet faded when she at last got out of the train, and stood tired and lonely, with her head still full of the ceaseless noise of the engine, upon the platform of the newly-built wayside station, where she was to meet her uncle. There was no one near except the station-master ; the place seemed surrounded by hills ; and, as she looked round, she shivered. The station-master seeing her alone with her luggage, had just come up to ask her if she wanted any assistance, when a tall countryman walked through the station with a large driving-whip in his hand.

"Well, I've no choice to make, so there can be no *mistake*," said he, in a rough but hearty voice, and coming

straight up to Agnes. "No doubt of your being a London lady. I suppose I speak to my niece, Agnes Allan : so how are you, my lass ?"

Agnes smiled, and tears of mixed joy and sadness came into her eyes as she gave him her hand.

"Ay," said her uncle, holding it, and shaking it whilst he looked at her. "You don't favour Ingilbys as you might do ; however, you're welcome ; so now where's your baggage ?"

Favour Ingilbys, indeed ! There could hardly be a greater contrast than between that great, broad-shouldered, lusty Saxon farmer, and the slight, graceful, small-boned Agnes ; he taking great strides as became his stature, she moving so quietly in her new deep mourning. But however unlike they were, she knew that she was with her own kith and kin again ; that hearty touch of her uncle's had seemed to take away her shivering, and she followed him gladly to the gig which was waiting for them on the newly stoned road outside the station.

Agnes had never been in a gig before in her life, nor, indeed, in anything but a cab or omnibus ; and as the uneven road led them up one hill and down another, she flinched and held fast to the gig-handle. Her uncle was much amused and laughed loudly.

"Wait a bit," he said, "there's worse roads before you get to Thorndale."

True enough, as she found, it seemed all up and down hill, with rocks at the sides and large stones in the middle, and Agnes thought every moment that she should be jolted out of the vehicle. They were driving a young horse too, which required all her uncle's management to keep it going straight ; but he found an opportunity sometimes

to say, "That's Boredale," or "That's considered one of the prettiest views about here;" and Agnes looked in the direction of his whip, and took in a vague impression of hill and dale, and dim masses of wood, then back went her eyes swiftly to the horse's ears, as if her only safety was in looking straight before her. Once she spied a house on the side of a hill, with a wooded gully close beside it; and anxious to show an interest, she said, rather tremulously, "What is that nice-looking house, uncle?"

"That? That is Howlet Scar," said he, quite shortly. "I suppose you know the name well enough;" and a turn in the road at that moment making Agnes feel as if she had been left sitting there, she said no more. They soon arrived at a gate before which they stopped, and her uncle getting out to open it, put the reins into her hand, and told her to drive through. Her heart beat, and she had just control enough to keep fast hold of the reins; but as for guiding the horse, she knew nothing about it. Fortunately, her uncle, though he had his jokes about her Cockney fears, took care to be at the horse's head soon enough to bring them safely through. There was the same misery to go through twice more; and then they arrived at the side of a well-built stone house, and her uncle said, "Here we are!" At the same moment, a farmboy appeared to hold the horse, and her uncle came round to lift her down.

"There, go in," he said to her, in a kindly voice, "you'll find your aunt somewhere. I'll see about your boxes."

Rather timidly Agnes obeyed him, and went along a *short, dark passage*. She was easily guided by the sound

of voices, and the light which streamed from a door at the side, which opened, as she presently found, into a kitchen, where a person like the mistress of the house was speaking, in a thin voice, rapidly. She had small features, rather a red complexion, not an unkindly but rather a silly expression, and was very smartly dressed in a black silk, and a black cap, with crape, flowers, and many jet dangling things about it. She was talking to a servant maid, who was frying chops upon the fire.

"And you must put the chops upon a hot dish, and not let them stand to stiffen as you did last time. I declare my time is spent in watching you, and this young lady that's coming from London,—why, bless me, here she is. How-d'ye-do, love? Are you cold coming along the moors? I'm sure when I went to market with Joshua, only last Saturday, I was quite perished coming back. Now just say, would you like to come to the kitchen fire, or will you go into the parlour at once, just say; for you know you're to be at home here. And I'm sure, very glad I was to hear that you were coming, not knowing your poor mother; but I always wished for a daughter of my own, which you know, your uncle Joshua and me, we have never had any children—not that Mrs. Ralph need hold up her head so, with her four boys as rough as any you could see—now, only just say, do?"

During this long running speech, she had shaken hands with Agnes, kissed her, and brought her into the comfortable-looking kitchen, where the maid-servant, with a knife and fork in her hand, stood staring at her, and the chops frizzled away without any attention. When she stopped for a moment, Agnes answered:

"Just which you please, aunt. I hope that you will make

no stranger of me, for I am very glad to be at home with you."

And, indeed, she spoke the truth; the hospitality and kindness of both aunt and uncle gave her a happy sense of having arrived at home, and she was very thankful.

"Well, now, I'm sure you're very pretty spoken," began her aunt again; "but I'm afraid that you'll only find it dull after London. You see, we've no neighbours to speak of; but now you've your bonnet on yet, and there's your room ready, though I'm sure that girl, Rachel, lazy as she is, has had small hand in it; and so come and get your things off, and then you'll want your supper, that is, if she doesn't burn the chops whilst I'm upstairs."

"Don't mind me then, aunt," said Agnes; "I dare say I can find my way upstairs," and with rising spirits she peeped round the corner of the door. "Where are the stairs, just tell me, right hand or left?"

"Left—no, I mean right; you turn after you get up the first flight. No, I'll go with you. Now, Rachel, do look to those chops."

Thus torn between two conflicting interests, Mrs. Ingilby chose the more novel one, and went upstairs with her niece, talking all the way, hoping she liked her room, and admiring every article of attire she took off, questioning about its price, and asking for the pattern, and expressing her surprise in the end how Agnes could be so neat and nice after so long a journey. She certainly did look very nice, although so pale, when she came down into the parlour. Here the cloth was laid for supper, and before long the dish of chops, steaming hot, although somewhat scorched, was served by Rachel.

Then both uncle and aunt were given up to hospitality, and the niece's small appetite was the subject of much lamentation.

"However, you'll improve," said Uncle Joshua, hopefully. "I expect, if all be well, I shall live to see you, maybe, driving me, who knows? and your appetite in proportion. She's worse than you, Martha, and that's saying a good deal, only she doesn't scream, and that's to her credit."

"Well, and I'm sure if one does scream getting behind such horses as your uncle here drives, it's no great wonder," said Mrs. Ingilby. "Everybody says it's not safe, this new one."

"I believe it went very nicely this evening," said Agnes, "and I noticed that it is a handsome horse; but I have been so little used to driving, that I am a coward. However, as uncle says, I hope I may improve."

"Well, my dear, you're very nice spoken about it, isn't she, Joshua?" said the aunt; "but speaking about driving, I hope you'll never take it into your head to go to Howlet Scar, at least unless you walk, for how Mrs. Ralph ever gets up and down, so stout as she is, is more than I can tell."

"There's no need of speaking about going to Howlet Scar to-night, Martha," said Mr. Ingilby, with a dogged sort of displeased look coming upon his face. "I don't suppose she's thinking about it at all, but of getting her supper, I hope."

"Thank you, uncle," said Agnes; "I have quite finished. It was Howlet Scar I looked at near the top of that high hill. Is that where Uncle Ralph lives then?"

"It is," said her Uncle Joshua, in a determined voice;

"but you see, my dear, we may as well tell you at once, that Howlet Scar is no nearer to us than Scarborough, as one may say. It is no use mincing matters, and as your poor mother could not inform you, not having been in this neighbourhood for twenty years and more, I may tell you that a more cantankerous person than Ralph Ingilby does not exist. About those fields was quite enough. Look—no, you can't see ; but I'll take you to-morrow to the hill, where you can trace them quite distinct. They had belonged to this farm for hundreds of years. My grandfather increased his property, and the beck running at this side of them makes no real difference at all, as the lawyers said. 'It was all a question of boundary,' as they called it, and being misrepresented in the will was not to be taken advantage of. But he never was one that would hear reason, so we made him hear law, which reason and law don't always go together ; but they did in this case, my dear."

Agnes gave a smile of assent ; she could do no more ; she could only listen, for she knew nothing but what her Uncle Joshua told her, only she saw the bitter feeling that existed, and, as her mother might have done, she deeply regretted it.

"Well, then," continued her uncle, "ever since that he has never been at rest with something or other, and his great lubberly sons take after him."

"They are all boys, then, my cousins ?" said Agnes.

"All boys. Ralph is at home learning farming, as they say, though how a man can teach farming that never knew himself is past me. John, the next, is put to a chemist's business, at Scarborough ; as for the young ones, *they say* she means them for gentlemen ; but I don't

know—anyhow they're off at school at present, only Ralph at home."

"Mr. Hall, the new rector, has been here whilst you were out," said Mrs. Ingilby, anxious to get her oar in. Nobody talked more than she did generally; but when her husband once began, she was obliged to wait her opportunity.

"The new rector; and what did he want? Did you tell him that we didn't know how to get Sunday noon over, seeing we were out of church so much sooner than ordinary?"

"No, Joshua, indeed I didn't," replied she; "though I might have been the one to ask him to go back to the fine long sermons Mr. Barrow used to give us, for I am sure it was worst for me. Mr. Robinson and you mightn't have bitten for a week by the way you came in on Sunday morning, and wanted dinner, though Rachel and I hadn't expected you for twenty minutes longer; and if ever I turn my back, she is out to speak to the men in the yard, or making an excuse upstairs to help herself out of my scented-oil bottle, as if I couldn't tell directly I came near her, for I must say—and not to know that it was one of Mrs. Ralph's sons when I went into the shop—that John Ingilby scented it very nicely for me."

"But what did the rector want, Martha?" said her husband.

"Well, he was very pleasant, and he talked about this being such a pretty country; and I said people often thought so till they began to climb the hills, and I told him about your being gone to the station to fetch Agnes here, who would be quite a stranger, and never out of London before; and he said he should come again, for

he wanted to see both her and you ; he wished to make acquaintance with all his parishioners, and then he said he was so fond of southernwood, it reminded him of being a little boy, and we were standing in the garden then, so, of course, I gave him a piece to take away with him ; and he was going, when he turned back to say that he was thinking of making some alterations in the chancel of the old church, and seeing that we were the principal people concerned, after he'd got his own consent, and he laughed at that very pleasantly, that he'd come to see you about it, and he was going on to Mr. Ingilby, of Howlet Scar, to arrange with him about it, too."

"I'll be dashed if he shall make any alterations in our seat," said Mr. Joshua, warmly. "He's one of that sort, is he? then he'll not do in this dale, I can tell him."

"I'm sure, Joshua, you needn't speak in that way," said Mrs. Ingilby, rather aggrieved; "for he was as pleasant as could be, only he spoke of times being changed, and of making churches as nice as we could, and it was civil enough his saying he would call again to see our niece, Agnes, here, and she, poor thing, must be tired to death with such a journey, and you'll have a little drop of something, my dear?"

This offer, seconded strongly by her uncle, was entirely resisted ; but Agnes, in whose ears the voices had been sounding for some time as if through a mist, confessed that she was tired, and after a little more kindly meant fuss, she was allowed to go to bed. Strange it was for her to waken next morning from her first sound refreshing sleep, with a bright sun beaming upon her, and all sorts of country sounds breaking upon the stillness. It was still early, and she lay for some time, thinking

first with gratitude that she had been brought to so good a home, and then with wonder of the discordant feelings that so marred it. Every subject—and she found it still more so afterwards—was brought round to the standing dish of complainings against Howlet Scar. How could brothers ever so regard each other! Oh, if she had had a sister or a brother, how different it should have been! She little knew how the god of this world, covetousness, can change the purest metal of affection into the dross of bitterness, when he lays his sacrilegious hand upon it. A dispute about money or possessions will sever the dearest connections, and the crack once commenced, and ill-will yielded to, then every little speech and incident distorted by the devil, will act as a wedge to widen it, and prevent the separated parts from peaceful union.

Agnes sighed, but she could make no better of it at present, and she thought that she would not be in haste to speak of going to the other house; perhaps if she was patient, some opening would be made, and meantime there was one plain duty before her, that of helping her Aunt Martha. There were many ways in which she had already seen she might be useful, and she resolved that no pains should be wanting to show to her aunt and uncle her gratitude for the welcome they had given the orphan girl.

Accordingly, as soon as breakfast was over, she begged her aunt to show her some work that she might begin with.

"Now I'm sure," replied her aunt, beginning after her usual fashion, "I don't expect you to be dirtying those white hands of yours with such work as there is about here, though your uncle did say I was to make a daughter

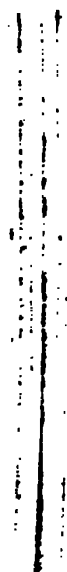
of you, seeing we had not been blest with one ; but how are you to know about setting up the milk and making butter, and getting the dinner ready ? I expect you are more Mrs. Ralph's sort ; she's always trying to seem as if she wasn't a farmer's wife, when everybody knows she is, and why shouldn't she be ? I'm sure she was glad enough to catch Ralph Ingilby, at a Christmas party it was, at Dingle, and they were all there ; now there's that girl in the yard again, and the bread to lay yet. Just go after her, Agnes, will you ; only mind that nice black print of yours ; if you get it wet, it will take the gloss off, and it's a pretty length ; I must have you let me look at the sit of the skirt behind." But Mrs. Ingilby was only talking to the chairs and tables—no unusual circumstance—for Agnes had slipped out into the yard to question Rachel, whence, finding that the girl had in fact only gone to fill the tea-kettle at the pump, she soon returned to explain to the mistress, and from that moment she was installed as listener, helper, and general factotum under her Aunt Martha.

As the morning proceeded, Mrs. Ingilby was astonished to find that the London girl, with the white hands, knew a great deal more about cooking than Rachel, perhaps in some ways than she did herself, though she was not going to confess that, and she knew the Ingilbys were always famed for their kitchen skill, and no doubt Mrs. Allan, being the daughter, had got the chief receipt-book away with her. The aunt and niece became very great friends ; but when her uncle asked her at dinner how she liked the place, she was obliged to confess, whilst she answered warmly, " Very much," that her experience lay in the kitchen and the dairy entirely. But in the afternoon,

when all was tidy and quiet in the house, except Mrs. Ingilby's ceaseless tongue—and, indeed, as she had gone upstairs to change her cap, that had procured a momentary respite—Agnes, with her needlework in her hand, strolled out at the door, round the side of the house, and into the little garden. What a strange prospect presented itself to the town-bred girl! Thorndale farm-house was built on the side of a sloping hill, which rose behind it steep and craggy, and all around there was alternate hill and dale, forming a large irregular amphitheatre, from which a stranger might well wonder if there was any exit, unless he observed a river at the bottom, which it was evident must find itself some outlet. Here and there the hill-sides were planted, and in some of the hollows there was a dwelling-house, taking away from what might have been the desolate aspect of the scene. Agnes, with a strong sense of the beauties of nature, was delighted. She marvelled where her eyes had been the day before, and, forgetting all about her work, which she had laid down on the flat top of the garden wall, she wandered on, drinking in the bracing pure air, and feasting her eyes upon the view before her. She had soon come upon a footpath that seemed to cross the hill-side. It was formed of much worn blocks of stone, laid side by side, and, if she had known as much, was very ancient—laid down by the monks of old, as a dry footway from one of their religious houses to another. But her thoughts did not stray so far. As she passed through the wood, and saw the trees growing out of a beautiful carpet of moss and ferns, as it were, she was thinking with a strange mixture of pleasure and sadness, "My mother has been here, too." But an unexpected obstacle stopped both her walk and

her musings ; the footpath brought her to the edge of a brook that ran down the wooded gully to join the river below. It was a pretty, sparkling stream, and it bubbled amongst the rocks and pieces of stones, or lay in clear pools reflecting the summer sky. At the other side of it, the footpath was continued up a smooth green pasture, and to reach it were some regular stepping-stones, easy to cross by any one accustomed to such a feat ; but Agnes paused, and looked, then put one foot on the first stone, and balancing herself, saw the water rushing with a mimic fury between this one and the next, and was retreating with a half-smiling, half-vexed contempt for herself as an arrant coward, when suddenly a large dog appeared, a shaggy shepherd's dog, and splashing through the water, without the aid of stepping-stones, came close upon her. She could not help a start and a little scream ; but a whistle and call of " Here, Rover, lad," relieved her in a moment, for the dog rushed back again, and she saw a tall young man coming down the pasture, from which the stream divided her.

He was a broad-shouldered, strong lad of about nineteen, with light brown hair, a sun-burnt face, and pleasant countenance. His long strides brought him quickly to the side of the beck, whence he gave a glance of curiosity at Agnes, and then saying, " Come in, Rover," he stepped across, followed closely and quietly by the dog. As they passed Agnes, who had drawn aside, he said, in a careless sort of way, " He startled you, I am afraid," and, without stopping, strode away. Agnes thought it rather strange that he should speak to her, but as he did not wait for an answer, it did not matter much. She watched him take another of the stone



pathways that led downwards through the wood, and then she retraced her footsteps to the farm.

Her aunt had found the dainty piece of needlework upon the garden-wall, and was looking out for her, with all sorts of surmises upon her lips, but when Agnes had told her adventures, she said, "My dear, that must have been Ralph Ingilby. There's no one else strides as you say he did."

"My cousin Ralph?" exclaimed Agnes.

"Why yes, of course, I suppose he is your cousin; though I should say, cousin is as cousin does."

"Well, he called his dog back, then, so he is my cousin," said Agnes, laughing.

"And coming across our farm, too," pursued her aunt, "that is just one of the things vexes your uncle. He can't stop up the path, or take away the stepping-stones, else Ralph, that's the father, would have the law of him, but he has plain enough told them he doesn't wish it, and still they come."

"That is a pity," said Agnes. "Where does it lead to?"

"It is the shortest road for them to the village—saves half a mile at least. I have heard Ralph himself say these roads were made by the monks hundreds of years ago."

"I should think, then, aunt, they don't want to annoy uncle; only to take the shortest road to Howlet," said Agnes.

"Humph, you don't know them," replied Mrs. Ingilby. "But see, here is your uncle coming in to tea. Just fetch that new cheese in from the dairy, will you, Agnes. I quite forgot it?"



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THE LITTLE FISH

There was a little fish that lived in the sea,
And he was very small and very blue,
And he was very shy and very true,<
And he was very kind and very good.

One day he was swimming in the sea,
And he was very happy and very free,
And he was very kind and very true,
And he was very good and very good.

One day he was swimming in the sea,
And he was very happy and very free,
And he was very kind and very true,
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THE END OF THE LITTLE FISH

Peace had been manifested—because they used to come to church without in the least trying to subdue their ill-will towards their Howlet Scar relations ; they sat close beside them, knelt—no, they none of them knelt—but they professed to join together in the same prayers and praises, and yet they were filled with the most un-Christ-like dispositions.

The church was a queer old building that had never been of very fine proportions, but had been much injured by the high-pitched roof having been at some time made nearly flat, and by the tower being lowered. There was a large chancel, and some fine windows, but the whole was disfigured inside by irregular high square pews of worm-eaten wood, and by much neglect and want of cleanliness and repair.

No wonder that the new rector, an energetic young man, who had been curate in a really well-ordered church in the south, was anxious to make some change without delay. Perhaps no wonder, either, that some of the old parishioners, who, with really pious hearts, had made their peace with God, and communed with Him, year after year, in the corners of these high old pews, without finding discomfort in their bare, uneven floors, or distraction in the barbarous psalm-singing or responding of the clerk, should say, in their Yorkshire dialect, “Na, na, what need for changing? things had dune varra weel for them, and wud do for them as sud come after them.”

Happily, Mr. Hall was not a man to run with foolish violence against their respectable prejudices. He knew that fine architecture or grand music in itself was of little value, and that kneeling or standing, turning this way or that, praying audibly or in silence, were not in themselves

certain indications of piety, or the reverse. "God is a spirit, and must be worshipped in spirit and in truth," but he zealously desired to cleanse the sacred building from all that seemed to be unbefitting the temple of the Lord, to bring beauty and harmony into its courts, and to train the young, at least, in those habits of external devotion which pay reverent honour to the Most High, and which he trusted might bring a blessing on their own souls. Hence his desire to persuade the brothers Ingilby to consent to his first scheme of restoring the chancel to its ancient, and perhaps more than its ancient, beauty.

As Agnes went into the church through the small chancel-door, to which their property in it gave them a sort of right, she saw just before her a very tall woman in handsome, though not deep, mourning; she walked through the chancel with a grand air, and just behind her, moderating his steps with difficulty, was the owner of the shepherd's dog, Agnes's acquaintance of two days before. This, then, was her cousin Ralph, and his companion was her Aunt Maria. They went into one half of a large square pew, which was separated from the other by a wall of wood, evidently newer than the rest, in fact, put up since the family divisions had prevented them from praying in peace together; and into the front half, her uncle ushered Agnes.

She knew little or nothing of her neighbours after the service had begun, but she was an unconscious object of great attraction to their unrestrained and wandering eyes. Young Ralph recognized her at once, and had great amusement in watching her, whilst Mrs. Ralph observed her with approbation mingled with annoyance that those low Joshuas had got hold of a girl who really

looked quite like a lady, and might have been a credit to the family. However, they would see, and in the intervals of the prayers, poor Mrs. Ralph's head was running on her plans for circumventing Mrs. Joshua, and giving this poor young girl, for she mixed up some benevolence with it, a chance of seeing something a little superior to the Thorndale ways.

The result of all this was, that on that Sunday evening an unusual visitor arrived at Joshua's farm. Agnes and her aunt were sitting together in the parlour; Agnes had her little hymn-book in her hand; although reading beside Mrs. Joshua was almost impossible. The hymn-book, however, had led to speaking of her old life, and of her mother; and Aunt Martha, thinking it a very proper Sunday subject, and having besides a good deal of curiosity, had for once been contented to listen, and had led her on to tell her much about her last sad trial, until her own tears had shown her sympathy with her niece, and Agnes had gratefully felt the relief of talking about it. They were sitting thus, when all at once there was a sound of horse's feet on the road outside, and a sharp knock, apparently with the head of a thick stick, upon the open door.

"Well, who can that be, I wonder?" said Aunt Martha, hastily wiping her eyes. "Riding too. It can't be Mr. Robinson, the other churchwarden; he's rather of a Methodist turn, and doesn't take his horses out on Sunday. There's another knock; they're impatient, however, whoever they be." And so saying, Mrs. Ingilby, at her leisure, went to satisfy her curiosity. In a few minutes she returned all in a fuss. "What do you think, Agnes?" she said, in an undertone. "It's young

Ralph Ingilby. I like his impudence. As bold as brass, he says, 'How-d'ye-do, Aunt Martha ! you'll be surprised to see me, I dare say.' 'You're right,' says I ; but I could think of nothing else to say, I was so flustered ; and so he held out this, and he said, 'You'll have a little cousin of ours staying with you, I believe ? Father had a letter from her mother before she died, saying she was to make acquaintance with us all, so here's a note for her. Will you give it to her, Aunt Martha, please ?' and with that he gave me this little flimsy thing, scented too, with her fine lady ways, and he's waiting for an answer."

Agnes, very much surprised, took the note ; but as she did so, she said, "Is not my cousin coming in, aunt ?"

"Not he, my dear ; we are not on those terms for me to ask him in. He has not crossed this threshold since he was a little boy in petticoats."

"He is waiting for you to ask him, aunt," said Agnes.

"Then he may wait," said Mrs. Ingilby. "Your uncle would not hear of such a thing. Read your 'note,' as she calls it, my dear."

Agnes glanced at the small, wiry handwriting, and, opening it, found an invitation for her from her 'affectionate aunt Maria' to take tea at Howlet Scar next evening, at six o'clock.

"What shall I say to it, aunt ?" said Agnes, handing the note to her.

"Nay," said Mrs. Ingilby, "don't ask me. It's not for me to say what Joshua's niece is to say to such a thing as that ; and talking about Ralph 'escorting' you, indeed ; if she means set you home, I suppose there's plenty of people here could do that for you."

"Perhaps, aunt," said Agnes, "I had better ask Cousin

Ralph to excuse my sending an answer, as uncle is not in. I hope that he will allow me to go, and that you will make no objection ; because it was my poor mother's dying wish that I should become acquainted with them. You know, she knew no difference between her brothers. They were both equally dear as she remembered them."

"Well, well, my dear, I'm sure," said her aunt, who had been much softened by the preceding conversation, "perhaps, that was natural, seeing that she had been away so long, and knew nothing about the low pasture, nor about how Timothy Chapman was served, which I never told you that, my dear. Indeed, you have heard nothing yet of the way they have behaved ; and let Mrs. Ralph with her fineries get hold of you, and there is no knowing what she may put into your head."

"There is one thing she can't put out of my head, aunt," said Agnes, softly, "and that is your kindness to me."

"I'm sure now, my dear, don't mention it," said her aunt, quite touched. "Well, just send what message you think proper ; only mind, if your uncle's vexed I can't help it."

With this permission, Agnes went out on to the road, where Ralph was still standing with his impatient horse, and Rover lying quietly on the ground beside him.

"How-d'ye-do, Cousin Ralph ?" said she. "Thank you for bringing this to me."

Ralph shook hands ; but big as he was, he turned red and shy, and only said, rather awkwardly, "You'll come, won't you ?"

"I don't know," said Agnes. "I must do as Uncle Joshua likes, and he is not in ; but I want you, please, to thank my aunt for inviting me, and say that if uncle

pleases, I will come, and if I do not come to-morrow, that I hope she will ask me again."

"You'll be always welcome," said Ralph. "We're own cousins, you know. For my part, I never can see what all this fuss is about."

"Nor I either," said Agnes, laughing gently. "So, Cousin Ralph, if you and I can help to smooth things, pray let us do so, and don't let them be vexed if I can't come to-morrow."

"I'll try," said he, and they shook hands on it. It was a simple bargain; but Ralph would have promised much more if Agnes had asked it with that pretty gentle smile of hers, and he did not forget it either.

"You must make friends with Rover," said he, as he was mounting his horse, and the dog got up and shook himself.

"I hope I shall," said Agnes. "Good Rover;" but that was as far as she got at present, for besides that she was not prepared to approach him very near, he did not give her time, but bounded away, and, with his master, was soon out of sight.

Aunt Martha was disposed to be jealous at Agnes staying out so long to talk to Ralph; but Agnes, by her mild replies, soon mollified her, and she began with the story of Timothy Chapman, and how Mrs. Ralph had turned him off the farm at a day's notice, because he had said that Joshua's wool was "a sight better that year nor theirs;" and this lasted until her uncle came in, when it was changed for the account of Ralph's visit and the scented note.

Then Agnes saw her uncle under a new aspect, and not a pleasant one; his face assumed an expression at once

fierce and obstinate, and he swore that he would have no such foolery—if Agnes lived with them, she did ; and he would have none of Mrs. Ralph's rigmaroles, and sending her son backwards and forwards. Agnes was frightened and grieved, but she only said, "It must be as you like, uncle ;" and, by degrees, he too softened down into stories of the enormities at Howlet Scar, which lasted until bed-time.

The next morning, however, as Joshua was going out of the farmyard, he heard a soft call of "Uncle," and Agnes was walking by his side into the field. "Uncle," she said, "do you really not wish me to go to Howlet Scar this evening ? You see my mother desired so much that I should get to know all my relations, that I should like to go this once."

"You say once," said her uncle, roughly, but still very differently from the way he had spoken the night before ; "but I know what it will get to, and it would be very unpleasant, seeing that me and Ralph have differed, to have you coming and going between us."

"I will never go without your leave," said Agnes ; "and I am not likely to forget that you are the uncle who has given me a shelter and a welcome when I sorely needed them."

"Well, well," said her uncle, much softened, "then if you like, go and see them ; but if you are the girl I take you for, you won't want to go again."

With this permission, Agnes was obliged to be satisfied. Aunt Martha said—"Perhaps it was as well she should go, and show Mrs. Ralph what London folks were like ; and she was to mind and put on the deep crape, and that jet brooch and earrings that Mr. Morison had given her :"

and after all the hard work of the morning, and the siding up of the afternoon, Mrs. Ingilby superintended the dressing up of Agnes for her visit. True it was that her dress fitted well, and was made in a novel fashion unknown as yet in the Dale, and that the jet earrings set off the pretty shape of the white ear and cheek—but most people would have looked as much at the clear brown eye and the calm, one might almost call it, holy expression of her well-cut mouth, and the natural refinement, which had made her uncle call her “quite a lady.” Aunt Martha, in her good-nature, was not satisfied with dressing her, but she must set her too, and they went together as far as the stepping-stones, when Agnes, encouraged by her aunt being with her, performed the feat of crossing them, and then, very proud of herself, nodded and kissed her hand with glee from the other side.

“Now you can’t miss your way,” called out Aunt Martha, across the stream ; “only keep to the stone foot-path you see before you, and uncle will come to meet you. Mind you start at eight o’clock ;” and then she retraced her steps, and Agnes set off alone on her visit to her new relations.

At eight o’clock, punctually, she set off back again. She would have come alone, only Mrs. Ralph would not hear of it.

“My dear, your cousin will escort you,” she said, with a grand air. “I grieve, indeed, that you should have to return to that dreadful Thorndale, though you say they are kind to you ; however, I trust that whenever you pine for more congenial society you will come to us.”

“Thank you, Aunt Maria,” said Agnes, quietly. “I hope to be able to come and see you again soon.”

Meanwhile, Ralph was standing outside with his stick in his hand and Rover by his side, looking quite determined on his part to set her home—and they started together very amicably, and after Ralph's shyness was over, they became very good friends; but as they crossed the last field on the Howlet Farm, they saw a man standing beside the wall below, and when they came nearer found that it was Uncle Joshua. He had come to meet Agnes, but not a step further than his own boundary. He had once sworn that he would never again set a foot on Ralph's ground, and he had kept his oath.

"Now, young man," he said, when they had reached the stile, and young Ralph stood rather awkwardly whilst he helped Agnes over—"now, young man, you may go back again."

"It is Cousin Ralph, uncle," said Agnes, lightly, but laying her hand upon his arm as much as to add, "Won't you speak kindly to him?"

"So I see," said her uncle, shortly; but he added, "Good-night," and Agnes, shaking his hand with a warmth which was intended to make up for her uncle's distance, said "Good-night" too, and they parted.

"We've had the parson up again to see us," said Uncle Joshua, as soon as they had started again: it was plain that he did not intend to talk about her visit. "He seems quite set upon this plan for altering the church. I can't think why he does not leave it alone."

"It is a good church," said Agnes, "but it seems to me that it might be much improved. We had such beautiful churches in London, uncle, and all over people seem trying to restore the old ones."

"I don't suppose people are any better for it," said her

uncle, "and so I told Mr. Hall. I did not feel inclined to give up the pew we have sat in for generations, and be put off with an open bench like the school children. I think Mrs. Ralph would scarcely stomach that, however she may want to curry favour with the rector."

He said this rather in a questioning manner, but Agnes did not reply. She had, in fact, heard a good deal about it, and she thought her Uncle Joshua was not far wrong. Mrs. Ralph was trying to persuade her husband to give up his seat, but she was mightily afraid of not having a good one in return; and the motives she betrayed for wishing it to be done, were a desire to take the opposite side from Thorndale, whose sentiments she had discovered, and also an anxiety to please the rector, who had "called" upon her, she said, three times since he came, and was a very genteel man indeed. So Agnes listened to her uncle's account of Mr. Hall, and his arguments—and agreed with them; but she said nothing about Mrs. Ralph, whose vain and frivolous attempts at seeming grander than she really was, added to her only half-concealed malice towards her husband's brother and his wife, made Agnes think with pleasure that, rather than with her Aunt Maria, her home had been made at Thorndale. Still hers was a difficult position, and she found it more and more so. Mrs. Ingilby was very jealous, and her jealousy increased with her liking for her niece. In giving her account of her first visit, Agnes was glad that she could show that she had not been unsettled by it, and that she liked Thorndale best; but then, she was anxious all the time to avoid increasing her Aunt Martha's prejudices against the other household, and to be quite silent on some points was the only way in which

she could manage it. She was invited frequently to dinner and tea and spend the day, and sometimes they wanted to take her home with them from church on Sundays, but, except once—that she might get to know her Uncle Ralph, who had been from home the first time she went—she always declined, for she saw that her going only made bad feelings at home, and checked the peace she wished to make. So she saw little of any of them except young Ralph, and it was astonishing how often, considering the untoward circumstances, they chanced to meet. If Uncle Joshua fell in with his co-churchwarden and asked him to come home to dinner with him, and they entered into earnest discussion of the parson and his whims, then Ralph was always at hand to walk with Agnes; and during the week, it often happened that if she went a little further than usual in an afternoon, or was even only sitting quietly with her work near the house, Ralph would appear, and they would enjoy a kind of conversation which had hitherto been unknown to the young man. Mrs. Ingilby had now begun to bear it patiently when Agnes came in and told her of these accidental meetings, and had even got so far as to say that, after all, a young man was not to blame for the fault of his parents; whilst on his part, Ralph had begun to soften matters at his own home. Until now, it had been the custom at Howlet Scar to bring in every little tale against the other farm that could be heard of, to repeat it and suggest possible bad meanings for both that and every speech and look of Joshua's family; but now young Ralph neither brought them in nor listened to them, and at least, from his behaviour, they became conscious in the house that it was neither charitable nor

brotherlike to be always speaking ill of Joshua. But they had no good foundation at Howlet Scar. Mrs. Ralph professed to be religious, and was very particular in going to church on Sunday, but on Monday she would be quarrelling with her husband—whilst he was utterly careless, and had only the merit of not pretending. He was a weak and yet an ill-tempered man ; no wonder that young Ralph, who inherited the good qualities of his grandmother, was glad to find a congenial spirit in his pretty, gentle cousin, Agnes.

Agnes, on her part, was becoming by degrees quite settled at Thorndale. Her aunt was no longer afraid of her hands being too white for real work, for they were often plunged in the butter-pot, or making up the dough, and better bread or butter had never been known there before. By degrees, too, Rachel, the girl, became more useful—for Agnes used to teach her, and stand between her and her mistress, taking off the edge of Aunt Martha's sharpness and the point of Rachel's sauciness, until Mrs. Ingilby herself said "it was wonderful how the girl improved ;" and Rachel, encouraged by success, fell in with many of the nice, particular ways "the young lady" had brought down with her from London. With her uncle, too, Agnes became a favourite. He was cross enough and rough with her as soon as he became quite accustomed to her, but she took everything quietly ; and if he scolded till she cried, there was always a smile ready very soon again. "She's a very still person," one of the neighbours said, and, indeed, it was like that—she appeared to spread stillness where she went, so that passion and evil-talking would seem unfit in her presence.

One day, in the autumn, her uncle came in from the

village in a very bad humour, scolding the boy in the yard for leaving a wheelbarrow out of its place, the girl in the kitchen for burning too much coal, and then, meeting with Agnes, he growled out—"Why isn't dinner ready? Here am I to be kept wasting my precious time while you turn over your fashion-book, or some such nonsense."

This was rather hard. Agnes had never sat down once the whole morning—baking, cooking, and cleaning; she had laid the cloth, hastily changed her own dress, and it was an account-book, not a fashion-book, that she was laying aside when she heard his step. However, she only said—"Dinner will be in in a minute, uncle," and, indeed, he had only had time to sit down in the parlour, before the pie was out of the oven and on the table.

But he was not to be driven out of his ill-humour yet, so he growled across the table at his wife—"Pie again! We have had nothing but pie for a fortnight."

Mrs. Ingilby was beginning as usual—"I'm sure, Joshua," and probably a quarrel might have ensued, when Agnes said—"There, aunt, what a pity. Aunt wanted to boil them, and I said you liked the rabbit-pie so much last time, that it would be better to make a pie again. They seemed very fine rabbits, uncle."

His own shooting: he was a little mollified; but still grumbled at everything, until his hunger was satisfied; then his woes flowed out. It appeared that he had seen "the parson," as he called him, to-day. Mr. Hall had been working quietly all these three months: he had gained favour and subscriptions, and the only thing wanted for the restoration of at least the chancel, was Joshua Ingilby's consent. Ralph's had already been

given, and some money besides, and it was some encouragement that the clergyman had passed on Ralph's readiness to assist him, that had enraged Joshua, and he had solemnly declared that he would stop the rector's plans, if it should cost him his last penny.

Agnes saw that in a moment of heat her uncle had said far more than he intended, and that in his secret heart he now regretted it.

"Mr. Hall would be grieved when you said so; wasn't he, uncle? He had so set his heart upon this."

"I don't care: serve him right," said Joshua. "Ralph makes for the Church, indeed!"

"I suppose that Mr. Hall knows all our family have been so," said Agnes. "They've been churchwardens for a hundred years, occasionally, Mr. Robinson says."

"Well, so they have, churchwardens to take care of the church," said Joshua, "and that's what I mean to do," and with a chuckle at his own wit, much of the remaining bitterness passed away, and Agnes holding out to him his pipe, ready filled, and a lighter, he soon puffed his way to the chimney. But he did not change his mind: he would not give way at least; and Mr. Hall, rather than provoke ill-will, patiently laid his scheme aside for the present. That touched Joshua more than anything: he saw the same kind of thing going on at home, that battle which is carried on with peaceful weapons in which the armour is a spiritual one, a war in which all selfishness was laid aside, all rancour, all sharp answers, all self-justification and revenge. He might have called it cowardice; but he knew better; he was beginning to have a glimmering of the truth that the noblest and the bravest one to be what the

world despises. Mr. Hall's preaching and Agnes's life were teaching Joshua this.

And so things went on till Christmas came. Agnes had been used to have a quiet Christmas always with her mother. There was plenty of merry-making all round her in London, and she was often invited to go and join some large family-party or other amongst her friends; but her mother in her widowhood did not care for gaiety, and afterwards her health prevented it, so she and Agnes had always spent the season tranquilly together, cheered by the presents that the gentlemen of the Institution never failed to send them in. It was quite different at Thorn-dale. There, preparations for the feasting began long before, and mince-pies and cakes and all the spiced dishes that had been made from the same recipes for generations, filled Mrs. Ingilby's larder. They were all invited to go to parties at the neighbours' houses, often at some miles distance; but Agnes, owing to her deep mourning, excused herself, and only entered into the gaieties at home. These were less than usual, for Christmas-day fell on a Sunday; many people, therefore, went to church, who had never thought of doing so on Christmas-day before, and though the Ingilbys had some friends to dinner and supper, it was nothing like the rollicking party they had had the year before. There was enough to do, however, particularly as they kept their Christmas-eve, and had neighbours in till nearly midnight; but by dint of working very hard early and late, Agnes thought she might well be spared to go to church. The idea, when first broached, sounded absurd to Mrs. Ingilby; but there was always something soothing to her mind in the thought that they had some one in their house quite as

strict about going to church as Mrs. Ralph, and who looked a good deal more like a lady, too ; so she let Agnes go, and Uncle Joshua went with her. She had only time to shake hands and exchange greetings with the Howlet Scar people ; but that she would do, as it was Christmas ; and Joshua, though he walked on, had nothing to say against it, and then she plunged once more into the bustle of hospitable preparation.

"It's nice for you having her," said Mrs. Barry, one of the neighbouring farmers' wives, watching Agnes move quietly about, seeing that no one was neglected, never thinking of herself. "I hear that Mrs. Ralph is none so well pleased that she did not go to Howlet Scar."

"I'm sure we are well pleased to have her here," said Mrs. Ingilby, strangely enough, not caring as usual to take up the allusion to Mrs. Ralph. "She's a fine girl, and it was very dull for me when Joshua had gone off to market or anything. She's good company, though you mightn't think it, seeing her look so quiet ; but she has such a way with her of turning everything the pleasant side upmost, and as for bearing malice, you might do what you like to her, and she'd smile at you next minute, if you spoke kindly to her."

At night, after all the guests were gone, and Joshua was having a pipe to solace himself with, he chanced to open his sleepy half-closed eyes, and saw Agnes crossing the floor with a glass-dish that her aunt had told her to put away. A gleam from the fire shone upon her face, and even Uncle Joshua could not help being struck with the marble paleness that spread over it, and the sad look of her dark eyes. "Hollo, Agnes," he said, "what's up, now ? Come here, child. Has any one been fighting

you? My eyes, if they have," and he cast rather an angry doubting glance upon his wife, who was sitting at the opposite side of the fire-place, "tired as a dog," she said.

Agnes brightened up in a moment. "Oh, no, uncle," she said, coming near and sitting down on a wooden stool beside him. "Nobody has been anything but very kind to me. I was only thinking," and, with all her bravery, she could not help her voice trembling, and a choking in her throat as she said it. "You see, uncle," she continued, looking into the fire, "Christmas coming only once a year, makes one think about things, and then one isn't quite so glad as one ought to be at such a time."

"Ay, ay," said Uncle Joshua, whilst her aunt wiped her eyes, being so tired herself that she was not sorry for an excuse to cry a little. "Poor sister Allan! You're right, child. I was minded myself to-night of years upon years ago, when Peter Barry was eight stone seven instead of fourteen 'ten, and he and your mother and—and—Ralph danced a three reel on the kitchen-floor; and your mother—she was as light and small as you—she danced them both out, and then she went and fetched them stools to sit upon, and some hot ale to drink—eh, how we did laugh at them."

Then Uncle Joshua puffed away; and Agnes tried to drive back the tears. "She was much like you," he continued, after a while, "only merrier, maybe. As for aunt there, she was at that dance, the youngest lass amongst 'em, and she was as jealous as could be, 'cause I was sweethearting Mary Howgego."

"I'm sure, Joshua, now I wasn't; I never had a

thought of you that night," put in Aunt Martha, with an angry toss of her head.

But Joshua took no notice except a sly look at her, and he continued, puffing out of the corner of his mouth, and talking. "There was a deal went on that Christmas, and just after that it was that Mary, your mother, went up to London, to stay with cousin Wilkinsons, where she met with your father, and from that time she seemed quite parted from us, somehow ; but she was a fine girl, was your mother, poor thing. And it was next fall after that, when your grandfather missed his way coming home in the snow from market, and Ralph and I went and found him just in time, and fetched him home. He had rheumatic fever after that, and he never was right down strong again. Poor father ! somehow I think he would have been put about to think we weren't altogether at Christmases now." But at this point Joshua with a sort of cough, and taking his pipe out of his mouth, and tapping it against the bar to get the ashes out, pulled himself up, and went on in a loud, hearty voice : "Now, lass, it's no use fretting, cheer up. You are a fine handy girl, isn't she, aunt ? and I should like to give you a Christmas-box. What shall it be ? A new gown ? and aunt shall get it at Scarborough for you, next time she goes, or Whitby either. Say what you want. Anything you like."

"I don't want anything of that sort, thank you, uncle," said Agnes, with a grateful smile.

"What sort, then ?" said Joshua. "I don't mean my niece to want for anything. So speak out. You'd something on your mind, besides fretting, that I know."

"Well, uncle," said Agnes ; "there are two things ;

but then they are both so large. At least one is," and she turned very red at her own temerity.

"Tell us what they are, and then I can choose," said her uncle.

"Uncle, please don't be vexed with me," said Agnes, fixing her dark eyes pleadingly on his face; "but the small one, I meant, was, would you give Mr. Hall what he wanted? He has been so quiet waiting for you."

"Upon my word," said Joshua, in a half-angry tone, "if that's small, what's the other? Out with it."

In desperation Agnes went on quickly. "Oh, uncle, it was if you would be friends with Uncle Ralph," and then she bent her head down, and leant it on her hand.

"You're talking about what you know nothing," said Joshua, with the hard look creeping over his face again. "What makes you care? You're well off here."

"Because, uncle, my mother wanted it so; it was her last wish, almost; she thought it wasn't right, whatever he'd done to you, or the other way either, she said, if you could only put away everything that had gone before; she was so frightened she shouldn't meet you both in heaven."

Whilst Agnes said this in a low tone, and with a beating heart, she never raised her head, her uncle smoked rather quickly, and Aunt Martha, rather awed by the turn the conversation had taken, wiped her eyes again and listened.

After some time Uncle Joshua spoke. "It's high time you women-kind were off to bed," he said, and not another word, except "Good-night," did he vouchsafe to let Agnes know whether he were vexed with her or not.

The next morning they resumed their usual life, and nothing was said about their conversation of the night before. Mr. and Mrs. Ingilby went out to tea and supper at Mr. Barry's, and Agnes stayed at home. The rest of the week was enlivened by sword-dancers coming about, and many people calling to taste their spiced cake and ale ; but no particular incident occurred until the Saturday afternoon, when, as Mrs. Ingilby and Agnes were looking over the stockings and things that had been at the wash, who should be shown in by Rachel but Mr. Hall, the rector, who had not been at Thorndale since October ? Martha immediately began to fret that so much of the best spice-cake had been cut away ; and Agnes to wish that her uncle had been in, that by chance he might have been mollified by the rector's pleasant manner ; but seeing her aunt in a fidget, she first of all slipped out to get the wine and cake ready, and then returned to the parlour, where Mrs. Ingilby was in the midst of a long story about the weather, and her servant, and the dangers of Dales' roads in winter, all having some remote bearing on her own going to church or not ; but she had not worked it round to that, when the refreshments arrived, and she began to press them upon her visitor. Mr. Hall—who by this time knew the customs of the country—accepted both, and offered all good wishes of the season, and then he said, “ I cannot help expressing to you, Mrs. Ingilby, the great pleasure your husband has given me by withdrawing his opposition to my plan about the church. I value the blessing of peace in a parish so much, that rather than risk the breaking of it, I have waited all this time ; but now, with your *husband's* help and encouragement, I have good hopes of

soon beginning the work. Before next Christmas I trust to see Howlet church restored to its full beauty."

"I'm sure, sir," said Mrs. Ingilby, pleased but confused, "to tell you the truth, I did not know anything about it. Agnes, here, has taken it quite to heart; but I'm sure, as long as I had my own corner, and could hear the sermon—for I am a little deaf at this ear, ever since I caught cold last back-end—I did not seem to care much about the matter. As for Mrs. Ralph—but, however, never mind, as Agnes says, one cannot judge anybody, seeing one doesn't know what's inside them."

The rector turned from Mrs. Ingilby to look at the young girl who was sitting at a little distance near the window, and he was struck by the gladness her face expressed. He spoke a few kind words to her; but he could not know how really deep her joy was, for she looked upon this as only the beginning of what she desired more than any earthly thing. Of course, when Joshua returned, his wife plunged into an account of the rector's visit, and how prettily spoken he had been about the church; and "What had you done, Joshua, to please him so?" she asked. But her husband, though there was gratification in his eye, was surly in his way of answering her; and Agnes durst say no more than, "Thank you, uncle," when she handed him his tea.

A week after this, there was a great snowstorm, and it happened at a bad time, when there was a fair at the nearest large town, to which Joshua always went. His wife wanted him to give up going; but what his father had always done, and his grandfather before him, he was not going to shirk for a bit of snow. So the women got up long before it was light and made him a good, hot breakfast,

which he took hastily, and then mounted his gig to drive to the railway station.

"If you're not back in good time, I shall send Reuben out to meet you."

"What nonsense you women talk," said he, as he warmed his large knitted gloves and put them on. "There's Barry going the same road, and Hutchinson, and that fine cousin of yours, I dare say—eh, Agnes, he'll take care of uncle—won't he?" And giving her a little tap on the shoulder, and himself a great clap on the breast, after he had buttoned in his comforter, he went away, leaving the women to a long, cold, dark morning, which they had proposed to themselves to spend in the making of oatcake.

Which of them shall we follow? Their day was monotonous enough; not a stranger crossed the threshold, and the snow fell continuously. But, happily, a woman's work, if she only tries to do it with all her might, brings its own reward; and the evenly-stitched button-hole, or the light, crisp loaf, as well as the finished drawing, or the embroidered pocket-handkerchief, supply a pleasure which is turned into the highest kind, if motives of love have urged the careful manufacture of them. With Joshua, the day was different: his little battle waged not with household spiders, as it were, but with rougher enemies; the driving blast, and the snow above his horse's feet, made his progress slow, and he had just time to give hasty orders about his horse, and to jump into the train as it was moving off. The fair was thronged with people, and he met many that he knew; *he did* a good deal of business, dined at the market-dinner, *bought* fairings for both his wife and Agnes, treated some

customers, and passed through all kinds of bustle until he arrived at the station to take the homeward train. There were a good many people on the platform, and, in the dim light, Joshua did not recognize any friends; so he got into the first carriage he came to, and sat down. Others came in, strangers to him; and then two, whom he knew quite well, Ralph Ingilby and his son. Ralph saw his brother, but he took his place without appearing to do so at the end of the same side on which Joshua sat; then came young Ralph, for whom there was but one place left, and that was opposite his father. As he took it, his eyes met those of his uncle, and Joshua nodded to him; a thrill of surprise and pleasure ran through the young man's stalwart frame, as he coloured deeply and nodded back again. The next moment the train moved on through the darkness, round the curves, up the ascent, passing the dangerous parts of the road with its usual safety. At each small station they drop a passenger, until there were only three left in the carriage; and these three were Joshua, and Ralph Ingilby, and the son. For some minutes there was not a word, although the three men were all filled with different emotions. His niece's words were in Joshua's ears, and other words besides hers, holy words that he had heard on Christmas-day, and at last he broke forth.

Shoving himself nearer to his brother, he said, "Ralph, my lad, are you willing to let bygones be bygones? We're both getting on, and it seems to me we've been parted long enough." And then he held out a broad, honest palm towards his brother. But Ralph did not stir.

"Father," cried his son, who had moved nearer to his

uncle, "don't you hear him? Oh, father, it's your brother; let there be peace between you now."

"Whist!" said his father; but, as he spoke, the sharp, shrill danger-whistle sounded, and Ralph Ingilby knew no more. The train had come in collision with some empty trucks, and the carriage they were in was thrown on one side off the line.

Well might Mrs. Ingilby and Agnes wait and watch, till the first fidget had turned into anxiety, and the anxiety into real alarm. They thought the snow had been too much drifted for Joshua to get through, and Reuben was sent to Barry's to hear if the master there had reached home. It was very late when he got back, and his report was such that they thought neither Mr. Barry nor Joshua had ventured from the station, but were waiting for the morning to begin their journey. Whilst they were discussing it, a messenger came from Howlet Scar. "Missis there was in such a fright, all by herself, and master and Ralph had not been heard of. Did Mrs. Ingilby know anything? Mrs. Ralph must, indeed, have been in a fright to be beholden to Thorndale for any information. Agnes would have gone to her, but, of course, Aunt Martha had the first claim. However, she wrote a kind, encouraging message from both her aunt and herself; and, glad of the rising moon, the messenger went back again. Aunt Martha would not go to bed, so they both sat up and watched till morning; when, though weary, the fears of the night seemed to vanish, and they sat down to an early breakfast. They had but tasted it, when old Reuben came in.

"Missis," he said, "they're talking all down in the village that Ralph Ingilby is killed. The boy for the

milk has brought the news. They say it was a railway accident, and young Ralph has just come home to his mother."

Agnes and her aunt were stunned ; doubt, and uncertainty, and horror succeeded each other. But soon Agnes roused herself, and said—

"Aunt, hadn't I better go to Howlet and see what has really happened ? Perhaps Uncle Joshua hasn't been in it, only Uncle Ralph."

But this attempt at consolation only brought the likelihood of danger to her husband more clearly before her, and Mrs. Ingilby was in such violent alarm, that it would have been cruel to leave her. At length she was somewhat soothed, and Agnes went to the door for a breath of air, for she was much exhausted. But the breeze that met her was an icy one, and she was retreating, when she thought she heard something coming, though with a muffled sound, over the soft snow ; and, looking out again, she saw her uncle's gig driven by a man she had never seen before. Then a great dread seized her, and she durst scarcely wait until the man reached the door. He looked a stupid ostler kind of man. "Where is Mr. Ingilby ?" she asked.

"At t' inn at S——," said the man. "T' Black Bull. I was to come for you, if it's Miss Allan. His brother's nigh killed i' t' railway, and if you want to see him alive, you mun come directly."

"Who's killed ? See who alive ?" cried Mrs. Ingilby, rushing out in a great fright. "Where is my husband ?"

"He's all reet," said the man. "It's Ingilby frae there," pointing up at Howlet Scar, "that's met wi' t' accident."

Mrs. Ingilby was in such a nervous state that it was difficult to make her believe anything but the worst about her husband, and nothing would serve her but go herself and see ; and as the only information that could be got out of the man was, that he was sent for Agnes, it ended in their both hastily wrapping themselves up, and packing into the gig, the driver being contented with a very small share of the seat, and his foot out in the cold upon the step. The road by this time was a good deal trodden, and no more snow had fallen since yesterday ; so in a shorter time, as it seemed to Agnes than when she had arrived six months before, they passed the railway station, and went down a steep hill to the village inn below.

There seemed a bustle when they drove up to the door, and another gig moved off to make room for them. Young Ralph, pale as death, was at the far end of the passage, and trying to comfort a tall person whom they concluded was his mother, but as soon as Agnes and her Aunt Martha entered, Uncle Joshua came to meet them. Mrs. Ingilby threw herself into his arms, with a scream of pleasure and relief, only subdued by seeing that he had a plaister on his forehead and one arm in a sling, but he stopped both her exclamations and questions by saying, " Hush, Martha, you needn't look at me, when our Ralph is lying yonder. It's that poor thing that needs a bit of comfort. See, honeys, what you can do for her." They had all moved on now to the door of a little parlour, into which the others had preceded them. Young Ralph was bending over his mother, who, strong woman as she seemed, appeared to have fainted. He now turned round and wrung his aunt and cousin's hands with a piteous look,

but not a word was spoken, and Mrs. Ingilby forgot all her own previous anxieties in seeing such real sorrow. In another minute she had thrown off her shawl, and had taken the management of the poor woman; then Agnes turned to Ralph and whispered, "Can I be of any use; where is your father?" She asked it with trembling lips, for she thought perhaps he was already dead. And young Ralph did not speak, he only beckoned her out, but when they had got outside, he said, "Do you think you can stand it? He is very bad, but there's a deal to do for him if you can."

"I can," said Agnes, with an inward prayer for help, and then she followed her cousin into a darkened room where, laid on the bed, was the mutilated, writhing form of Uncle Ralph. She heard his groans of agony, but half blinded as her eyes had been by the snow, at first she could see nothing, when she did, it required all her fortitude to bear it, but in the midst of all, the thought rapidly crossed her mind, how strange that they should all be there, and Uncle Joshua, too, at the other side of bed, making awkward attempts to help the still clumsier woman who was waiting upon the sufferer. But there was no time for thought at present, there was so much to be done. At once Agnes took the place which the woman yielded to her, and all that firm but tender hands, skill, and patience could accomplish was done for poor Ralph Ingilby. But it was some time before there could be the slightest hope that any care would avail to save him. Doctors had been summoned by telegraph, and Joshua had been wild to see that everything they suggested was procured at once, but nothing was so good for him as this quiet young girl, who had been taught long

ago by affection how to nurse the sick, and who was now supported in her exertions by the strength she sought from heaven.

As for her Aunt Maria, this sudden blow coming upon one whose mind had been spent upon petty worldly objects, and who, whilst keeping up a show of religion, had never desired to be wholly under its influence, she seemed to break under it, and far from being any help in the sick room, ever since that first peep into it, which had caused her to fall into a fit, she required care herself, instead of being able to offer it to others. And for three days and three nights there was little change in any of them. At last a glimmer of hope came, and the doctors said Ralph might recover. He had lain in a state of semi-unconsciousness, waking only to paroxysms of pain, and relapsing into torpor, but one night he aroused without the usual agony, and opened his eyes. At that moment his brother alone was near him. "Joshua," he said feebly, and stretched out his hand. The other clasped it warmly, and one great tear fell upon it. There was no need for more words. The brothers had felt the long misery of being separated, and now they tasted the happiness of being at peace. Petty disputes, jeerings, misrepresentations, where were they now? Gone as if they had never existed. Such things look small and insignificant when a man has been face to face with death. From this time there was an improvement. Ralph's naturally good constitution promised to repair the injuries that he had received. When he was out of danger, the Thorndale people began to think of returning home. Uncle Ralph, however would not part with Agnes, and Mrs. Ralph herself asked Aunt Martha if she would spare her to

them. So for another week, she remained in close attendance upon her uncle, and then by that time, he was able to return home, and Agnes was released. But, although she went back to her home at Thorndale, it was not as formerly to be separated from Howlet Scar. Every day she went over to see Uncle Ralph, and as often as not Uncle Joshua was with her, whilst on the other hand young Ralph had to come with many a message to the Thorndale farm, and had not now to wait for an invitation before he crossed the threshold. But the great jubilee day was on Agnes's birthday in the early spring, when Uncle Ralph was to be brought to dinner ; a pale, thin man, on crutches he was, and as he came from the gig to the house, he was supported by his wife and young Ralph, who had walked on before, to be ready to help him out. There was much that was painful in this, his first entrance into the house of his fathers, from which he had been disunited for so many years ; but they all felt that it was the beginning of a new and better time, and hope cheered them through the day. As for the young ones, Ralph and Agnes, their happiness seemed complete, and in after years when a future generation of Ingilbys was springing up, the great aim of both of them seemed to be, to promote forbearance, and patience, and forgiveness throughout the family, and to teach that he is the truest, bravest soldier of Christ who spreads Christ's peace around.

Lettice Modern.

"Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake :
for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven."

"Is he alone in that dark hour,
Who owns the Lord of love and power ?"—KEBLE.

AFTER Miss Amy's death, Lettice felt for a little while as if she had no more object left in life. She had been so long almost entirely separated from her own family, and she had loved Miss Amy so very dearly, that it seemed as if nothing else would ever have any interest for her. But it was only for a time that she wept such hopeless sorrow ; as she dwelt upon every word and look of her young mistress, she began to remember Miss Amy's wish that she should not grieve for her, and repenting of the rebellious spirit which had so sunk under this sad trial, she determined to shake off her sorrow, and arouse herself to do and suffer her Master's will, sustained by the sweet memories of holiness, which the seven years passed with Miss Amy had left with her.

Mrs. Annesley's health was now so completely shattered by her griefs, that she determined to break up her establishment and go abroad, with a widowed sister who would henceforth live with her. She would retain her own maid, Robey, but the other servants were all dis-

charged. Meanwhile she remained shut up in her private apartments, and especially she would not see Lettice, but she sent her a gold locket containing some of Miss Amy's hair, the books and her work-box that Miss Amy had left to her, and a handsome present in money, with a kind message through Mrs. Moss the housekeeper, and then Lettice was free to go to her own home, and seek another situation.

Here the seven years had brought great changes, happily for the better in some ways. The father had given up his drunken habits, and Mrs. Moden, though careworn, and suffering from impaired health, was a much more contented woman than formerly, and no less industrious. The two girls next to Lettice had been put out to good situations, thanks to the influence and character of the eldest sister, and Jack was just going to be apprenticed to a carpenter. Thus there were only two little ones at home, but they and all looked up with great respect to the sister who had lived so long and with such credit at the Hall.

Before Lettice had been a week at home, she received a letter from Robey, written at the request of her mistress, to offer to her the place of housemaid and lady's-maid to a niece of Mrs. Annesley's whom Lettice had once seen at Aston Hall. This young lady had been married about two months ago, to a gentleman who was in one of the government offices and consequently lived all the year round in London. She had taken her own maid abroad with her, but the young woman would not stay, because Mrs. Malcolm's establishment, to suit her income, would be small, and the housemaid was to be her only personal attendant. Lettice was young for so responsible a

situation, but Mrs. Annesley's strong recommendation made the young wife's friends anxious to secure such a treasure, they offered high wages, and Lettice, glad to remain with some one who had known and loved her dear Miss Amy, accepted the situation gratefully, and after leaving well-chosen presents with everybody at home, she once more bid them good bye, and entered upon her new service.

Mr. and Mrs. Malcolm lived at the West-end of London, in a small house in a fashionable locality, and a cook and man-servant, with Lettice, completed their establishment. Mrs. Malcolm was a tall, stylish lady, with assured manners beyond her years, for she was but eighteen, sufficiently kind-hearted, and devoted to the amusement of the passing hour without a thought beyond. There could scarcely be a greater contrast for Lettice than the life here and the one at Aston Hall, for there she had scarcely ever seen the servants' hall, and Miss Amy's rooms were the abode of luxury and peace. In W—— Street, there was an appearance to keep up, on means rather inadequate without good management, and management of any sort Mrs. Malcolm would have scorned. "I leave all to my cook," she said with a grand air, as if she had been speaking of a housekeeper and twenty servants, and all she cared for at present was to procure as much gaiety as was possible under their circumstances. Hence her servants had much work, and little consideration. Lettice, the most, because, besides having the house duties to perform, she had to turn and twist and ornament her mistress's dresses so as to make them appear to the best advantage at small cost, and she had to keep late hours *at night*, and early ones in the morning.

She did not however mind this much, she knew that a servant's life could not be one of ease, and that her experience at Aston Hall could never be repeated; besides, personally, she had a regard for her cheerful young mistress, who though hasty sometimes was kind and genial in her manner, and always treated Lettice freely, as if she were an old confidential servant, though she was in fact young and blooming, and only just twenty-one.

Lettice wished that she could have liked her fellow servants as much as her mistress, but the cook, Evans, was a sort of person you could not have confidence in, plausible, but deceitful; whilst in William the man-servant, there was a freeness of manner that Lettice could not endure. Besides, their tone of speaking and acting was so different from what she had been accustomed to; instead of trying to render faithful service, they were continually thinking of their own interests first, and thought little of cheating their employers, of time at least, so they could do it with success. Hence Lettice soon found her position most unpleasant.

Her housemaid's work naturally took her away from them, and her sewing was done in a little room that opened out of that of her mistress, but she was obliged to sleep with Evans, and at meal-times the conversation was what she could not hear without disgust. At times she thought the fault must lay in herself. "It is I that am spoilt," she would say. "How can I expect to meet with such as Miss Amy in my fellow-servants, so holy and refined! It must be that I am spoilt, I will try not to mind, but to make myself more agreeable to them."

And she would go downstairs with a ready smile, and

speaking pleasantly to them, and things would go on nicely till William would make some coarse joke at which Lettice could not and would not smile ; and then the cook and he would either exchange glances, or they would launch out into some kind of talk that would make 'Miss Prim,' as they called her, wish herself safely in her workroom upstairs. For they had soon discovered that Lettice was different from themselves. "One of them sort," as Evans expressed it to a crony of hers next door, "takes her Bible out every night, and reads as solemn as you please, and then down on her knees for ever so long ; sometimes she cries—they say she was very fond of the young lady as she lived with before ; I don't know, only she has a silver watch she always wears, and fine books and things that was given her. I can't say but what she's easy to live with in a way, but she's always for being so partikler, which us poor servants cannot be—it's not to be expected—and I'm sure me and William we scarce dare speak before her."

It was not only Evans and William that complained of Lettice being too particular ; at the end of a few weeks she had a little jar with her mistress on somewhat the same score. It was about Sundays. The young lady and her husband invariably went out on Saturday evenings, and staying late, rose at such an hour next morning that it was considered impossible for Lettice to attend morning service, and several times it had happened that she had no opportunity afterwards. Lettice knew very well that to those who are prevented without any fault of their own from attending public worship, Almighty God will give *His* grace in some other way, but she grieved over the privation, and believed that she ought to make an attempt

to alter it. So the Sunday afterwards, she asked if she might not go to church.

"Certainly," said Mrs. Malcolm, in her frank, easy way, "Certainly, Lettice, if you like. Let me see though, to-day you cannot very well, for I am going to the Zoological this afternoon, and you must dress me ; but at night, no, not to-night, a friend of your master's is coming in to dinner, William is going out, and we shall want you. Next Sunday you shall go."

But next Sunday it was nearly the same, so Lettice took courage, and spoke up boldly. It was not an occasional church-going she wanted, only to be sure, that except on extraordinary occasions, she might go regularly once a day, and morning at least alternately.

"Dear me, Lettice, how troublesome," said Mrs. Malcolm. "Of course, we have no objection to your going to church ; Mr. Malcolm has a brother who is a clergyman, and he is very particular, and we should go every Sunday morning, only, as you know, I am not very strong at present, and Mr. Malcolm will make me take such stupid care of myself. What makes you so anxious about it, Lettice ? Some friends you want to go with, I suppose ?"

"No, ma'am," replied Lettice, "I know no one in London ; but it makes me feel wrong all the week when I have not been at church on Sunday."

"I am wrong all the week, then, I suppose," said her silly young mistress. "I think that is rather impertinent of you, Lettice."

"I beg your pardon, ma'am," answered Lettice, colouring, "I did not take the liberty of thinking of you. It was myself entirely, I mean. I need all the help and

strength that seems to come best in church, and whilst I was with my dear Miss Amy, I was able to go so often, that I miss it sadly now."

"Ah, poor child, yes, she used to think immensely about such things, I remember. Well, you must speak to Evans about it, and arrange it with her. I will try to dress without you, but it will be very troublesome."

It was a most disagreeable thing to speak to Evans upon such a subject ; however Lettice felt that it was the right thing to do, so she asked her at once as a favour if she could help her, and after some teasing and opposition, she arranged with the cook, who was by no means an ill-natured woman, and allowed that Lettice had as much right to her fancies as she had to hers, that she should take some of the housemaid's work on Sunday mornings, in exchange for which Lettice would do anything for her during the rest of the day, and let her always have the Sunday evenings out, which she cared for much more than the mornings. Indeed, Evans would not go out except in the evening if she could, so it was the more easily managed, and Lettice was thankful for her own sake, in spite of some drawbacks. For instance, Mrs. Malcolm was not nearly so chatty as she had been before this matter was discussed, and especially on Sundays was rather cross, when no doubt the sight of her neat maid, as she returned brisk and cheerful, anxious in every way to oblige, was a silent reproach to the mistress, who generally lay in bed till eleven o'clock, and if she attended Divine Service one Sunday out of four, thought it rather wonderful. Besides this, she had now shown herself decidedly downstairs, as Miss Piety, the new name instead of "Prim" and more than ever she became an easy butt

for William's wit, and a source of amusement to the cook. Time was, when Lettice would have flown into a violent passion, and given them quite as good as they gave her, but she had learnt self-control since then, and a quiet, sensible answer was all they raised, or perfect silence if their jokes reached blasphemy.

"I don't think I can stay long though," said she to herself, but then she had never been in but one place before, and unlike many modern servants, she shrank from changing for such a reason as a little personal discomfort, and she considered her mistress too, who on the whole was so kind to her, to whom Lettice felt she was of use, and who was besides Miss Amy's cousin. So she tried first whether patience would not mend matters, and every now and then she was encouraged, for the servants did get tired of teasing her when they found she would not be irritated; and after they had had a proof that she was not one to make mischief for them upstairs, as they expected she would have done, being such a favourite with the family, they had the grace to be grateful.

The fact was that Mrs. Evans had a lover, a young man in the haberdashery line, she said, though he had a black moustache, wore much false jewellery, and had altogether the air of an actor in a low theatre, rather than of a respectable tradesman. To Evans, however, he was a darling, and all about him, to his name, Henry, or as she called it, 'Enery Higgins, "lovely;" and after she became acquainted with him she used to rave to Lettice about his charms, until the latter longed to tell her to hold her tongue. Very soon, the young man began to be admitted in the evenings, and one night when the mistress was unexpectedly at home, he came in with his pipe lighted,

and such an odour of tobacco went up into the drawing-room, that Mrs. Malcolm rang her bell to know the reason, and William said the butcher had brought some kidneys for breakfast next morning, and had been smoking as he gave them in at the areas, but they fully expected that Lettice, who happened to be downstairs heating an iron at the time, and had looked grave at his account of his own ingenuity, would explain it to her mistress afterwards. As she did not, they declared that she was made of stouter stuff than they had looked for, and they proceeded to greater lengths.

One evening Mrs. Malcolm went out to a large ball. Lettice had a busy day before in preparing her toilette, but was repaid by her husband's pleasure, and by seeing her look so handsome in her white tulle dress, trimmed with bright geraniums and ferns. After Lettice had put on her white cloak, and seen her placed in the brougham, she still had much to do, in re-arranging the untidied rooms, and it was late before she went down to supper.

When she reached the door of the area parlour in which the servants took their meals, she was surprised to hear more noise than Evans and William could possibly have made by themselves, or even with the assistance of 'Enery. But her surprise was complete when upon opening the door, she beheld the table spread out with a handsome supper and four strangers present, all laughing and talking without restraint. The cook, who presided, was dressed in a smart old muslin, which Lettice felt convinced was one of her mistress's that she had herself laid aside in a wardrobe some weeks before, but she had no time to observe with accuracy. They all burst into peals of loud

laughter when they saw her stand in astonishment at the door, but Evans soon recovered, and called out—

“Walk in, walk in, Miss Moden, we’ve kept a place for you.”

Lettice still hesitated, and she said, “I did not know, Evans, that you were going to have anything of this sort.”

“Well, I suppose you didn’t,” said that lady; “I suppose you mean as how if you had, you would have asked your young man to join us.”

This was received with a burst of merriment, amidst which Lettice sat down to eat her supper. The repast had already been done much justice to, but Lettice saw that it consisted of several dishes, that were quite unusual at the servants’ table.

“Take an oyster patty, now do,” said William.

“No, thank you,” answered Lettice, helping herself quietly to some bread and cheese.

“A bit of chicken, then,” said another of the men.

“I have what I require, thank you,” said Lettice, coldly.

The cook looked frightened. “Missis told me I might have a friend or two,” she said, “and Mrs. Embden here, she made me a bit of jelly, so I got the other sweets, for I don’t like to see one thing laughing at another.”

“In course not, Mrs. Evans,” said ‘Enery. “I like your sperit, and here’s to your ‘ealth in sperits, too,” and again they all laughed uproariously.

But it is no use following their foolishness. Lettice only stayed until she had finished her supper, and then bidding them a civil good-night, she left the room, followed by a host of gibes and sneering speeches.

When Evans came up to bed, she said, yourself off in a mighty hurry, Lettice. W after you had gone."

"I hope you would not think me unkin you," said Lettice; "but really it did not right sort of thing at all, and I could not fee to have anything to do with it."

"Why, where's the harm?" said Evans uneasy laugh. "Master and missis was pleasure, and it's very hard if poor serve have a little, too."

"But the things on the table?" said Lettice.

"You've nothing to do with that; you'll to pay for them," said Evans.

"And the dress you had on. Excuse me did Mrs. Malcolm really give you that?"

"I shall tell you no more," said Evans dare say that you grudge me the poor bit o I maintain missis has a right to do what her own things."

Lettice felt puzzled; she did not like to picious, yet she felt almost sure that Evans her. "Then, Evans," she continued, "the other thing I should like to mention, v talking, and that is the improper conversat on, and mocking at religion so. I do not ti Christian people it is right, even at their r less moments, and it is sure to lead to bad a end."

"I'm much obliged to you, I'm sure, Miss taking my character away. I had one before most fortunately, and I can tell you as how

worse for you, if you go preaching about, and you that are no better than other people either. If you choose to blab to missis about anything you see and hear down-stairs, she shall know about your goings on, I promise you."

At this moment the carriage drove up to the door, and a thundering knock announcing the master and mistress's return, Lettice, without more words, went down to meet them.

Mrs. Malcolm looked pale and tired, a very different person from the brilliant figure who had gone out some five hours before, and the first thing she said was,—“Is there any fire in the kitchen, Lettice? I am so cold; I must go somewhere and warm myself.”

“I will light a fire in your bedroom or the drawing-room, in a moment, ma'am,” said Lettice, “and bring you some hot wine-and-water.”

“No, no, I am perished,” said Mrs. Malcolm, shuddering. “If you have hot water, there must be a fire. I will go downstairs. This is not like summer—so cold.”

Trembling for the consequences of this strange freak, Lettice followed her mistress into the lower regions, where her foot had rarely trod before. Such a scene there presented itself as even Lettice had not expected. The parlour-door was standing wide open, so both places were exposed to view, in all their confusion. Evans had been much too excited and tired to put things away, and William had gone with the brougham to attend his master and mistress. Chairs were turned over, glasses broken, bits of food scattered about, and a mingled smell of spirits and tobacco pervaded the whole place.

“What is all this, Lettice?” cried Mrs. Malcolm,

indignantly. "What have you all been about? How could you bring me down into this confusion? Max," she called to her husband, "do come here."

Mr. Malcolm, who had been looking very cross, and who had just lighted a cigar in his little library, obeyed the call unwillingly, but when he saw the state of things, he was roused up, and angrily demanded an explanation of Lettice, who was endeavouring to clear a space near the fire for her mistress.

"I do not know much about it, sir," said Lettice; "I have not been downstairs more than a quarter of an hour to-night, that was at supper, when I saw that Evans had some friends. I understood her to say that she had leave."

"Leave!" cried the master, and then he burst out into the most violent invectives, swore that they should all be turned out of the house next morning, and added some remarks to his wife about her fine confidential maid, whom he had guessed all the time was, in spite of her professions, not a whit better than the whole pack of them. Mrs. Malcolm answered him warmly, and was inclined to take her maid's part, and in the end he bounced out of the place with a declaration that she might manage her servants as she liked, if only she did not trouble him; and Lettice was the sorrowful witness to the first serious quarrel that had taken place in the eleven months they had been married.

So obliging was Lettice, and so attentive to her comfort, that Mrs. Malcolm, with her previous experience, could not believe but that Lettice had told her the truth; and after declaiming a little against the unreasonableness of husbands in general, and her Max in particular, she

allowed herself to be undressed ; and Lettice, much wearied, rejoined her fellow servant, who was now, however, snoring.

The next morning Mrs. Malcolm might have lazily passed the matter over, but her husband insisted that she should make inquiries, and as she was sharp enough when her faculties were really used—the matter ended in the cook receiving a month's warning, and William a severe reprimand. Then dire were the threats of vengeance—nothing would persuade Evans but that Lettice had been the cause of the revealment, and she vowed that before she left the house, Lettice should repent of her interference. And to explain how she fulfilled her intentions we must go back to a certain Sunday some two months before.

It was early in July, and the weather was most unsettled. Still the morning had been bright and fine, and regardless of her usual prudence, Lettice had gone to church without preparing for a possible change of weather. She still wore her mourning for Miss Amy, which had been extremely handsome, and on coming out into the church-porch, she was rather dismayed to see that rain was falling heavily. Some people drew back to wait in the church, but Lettice knew that her mistress would be expecting her and she ought to hasten. With rather a rueful glance at herself therefore, she gathered up her crape-trimmed skirt as well as she could, and went out into the rain, which literally was pouring down in torrents. She had not been unobserved either now or previously. A respectable young man and his sister had frequently noticed the quiet girl in mourning, who was always alone, and behaved so reverently, and seeing her close to them

without any shelter, they exchanged a few words—and then the young man hurried after her and offered his umbrella. Lettice hesitated ; she knew that in London it is not safe to accept civilities from strangers, but he pointed out his sister a few yards behind, and said he could join her if Lettice would accept his umbrella ; and she looking at both the faces, and seeing nothing but honesty and good-nature, took the proffered shelter gratefully. There was not much opportunity of speaking in the rain and the midst of a stream of people, but Lettice kept near to them until when they had reached the street next to the one she lived in, they stopped at the door of a butter and cheese shop that Lettice knew as supplying most of the large houses round, and here the young man let his sister in.

“I will come with you,” he said, “if you will allow me, and then I shall not trouble you to send back the umbrella ;” and taking it out of her hand, in a respectful manner that could excite no alarm, he held it over her.

From this they easily entered into conversation, about the church they both attended, then compared it with country churches ; the young man told her that he had only taken this business from his uncle some three years before, when the uncle had got married and taken a farm near his native place, from which he now supplied the shop by rail, with butter regularly ; and before they reached Mr. Malcolm’s door, Lettice had made the wonderful discovery not only that her new acquaintance’s name was Charles Denman, but that he was nephew to the Mr. Denman who had married old Nurse Atkins. So completely without friends as Lettice was in the great city, for she could have no pleasant intercourse with her fellow

servants, it was very nice to meet with this intelligent young man, who had evidently been well brought up and educated. He gave her, in his orphan sister's name and his own, a warm invitation to visit them whenever she could, and she went in with a happy sensation of being no longer lonely. It was rather a check to be received by Evans with—

“Ha, ha! so you're not above bringing your young man up to the door with you. That's why you wanted to go to church in the mornings, then, and under an umbrella too. Now, come and tell us all about him?—there's a dear.”

“He is a nephew of the nurse under whom I lived for five years,” said Lettice, quietly. “I never saw him until this morning;” and then she went upstairs to her mistress.

After this, she saw Denman and his sister as frequently as circumstances would allow, and a mutual regard sprang up between them. Several times Lettice went to tea with them—when their neat, little home, kept by Ellen in cleanliness and comfort, seemed like an Eden to her—and every Sunday she was able to exchange some words with them on their way from church. But from all this Evans had a handle for her coarse wit, which sometimes even drew secret tears from her victim.

A lull followed the storm we have related, but it was not a peaceful one. Evans and William both took no pains to conceal their spite against Lettice; and her mistress, full of suspicions, was always on the look-out, and frequently very cross, including Lettice, when she said that servants were a deceitful class; and Lettice would have had a poor time of it, had she not known

that she had true friends near her in Charles and Ellen Denman. She did not tell them her especial troubles, because she thought it not right to talk about her mistress's affairs at all ; but in speaking of the trials of a servant's life, their separation from their own family, their loneliness, if their companions were uncongenial, and their peculiar temptations ; and also of the only way in which to gain patience to bear them, the only source of strength, she knew that she was neither misunderstood nor laughed at. There was no cant, nor forcing in of set religious conversation ; but Charles and his sister were earnest Christian people, who sought to do their daily duties well from the highest and most pure motives.

One evening about a fortnight after the discovery of some of Evans's evil practices, Mrs. Malcolm was again dressing to go out to a large entertainment. Either Lettice's fingers were less skilful, or her mind was pre-occupied ; for she made several mistakes in handing her mistress things, and in doing her hair handled it most awkwardly.

"What is the matter with you, Lettice?" asked her mistress, pettishly. "I never saw any one so clumsy. There, you stuck that hairpin into my head."

"I beg your pardon, ma'am," said Lettice, and she took especial pains to finish the dressing more successfully. "What jewels will you wear?" asked Lettice, after the blue silk dress had been put on. "Your sapphire ornaments?"

"I don't know," said Mrs. Malcolm. "Perhaps my pearls. Get both out, and I will choose. There is the key."

Lettice unlocked the jewel-case, took out the two sets, and absently locked it again, and put the key in her apron pocket. Mrs. Malcolm had both sets tried on, and finally fixed on the pearls, leaving the others lying on the dressing-table. As Lettice was clasping the necklace, she said, "May I go out to-night, ma'am? The friend I told you about, Ellen Denman, is very ill."

"Oh, that is what you have been thinking about, is it?" said her mistress. "I really think this tucker is too high after all; but it is too late to alter it now. Nothing infectious, I hope?"

"Are you ready, Gertrude, or not?" said Mr. Malcolm, at this moment opening the door, and putting rather a cross face inside. "You know we have to call for my aunt, and she will be in a precious fidget, if we keep her waiting. I never saw anybody so long as you are."

"Now really, Max, it is too bad. Just because you happened to be ready yourself rather sooner than usual. And you never look at my new blue dress. Your aunt is of far more consequence."

Mr. Malcolm finding that she was ready, did condescend to look and to admire, too, and they went downstairs together, thinking only of each other.

"She never answered me," said Lettice to herself, after she had seen them off; "but I know that I may go. Poor Ellen," and with her mind full of her friend, who, as she had only heard that afternoon, was suffering from an acute attack of inflammation on the lungs, she went back into her mistress's room to make it tidy, as quickly as she could. The first thing was to put away the sapphires; but when she was going to do so she couldn't find the key, and, forgetting all about putting it in her apron-pocket,

sought in every other place, and at last concluded that her mistress must have taken it up, and just for the present placed the case of sapphires in the top drawer of the wardrobe. She then put her bonnet on, and, after telling the cook where she was going, hastened to her friend. She found her indeed very ill ; but the doctor gave them hopes that her naturally good constitution would triumph over the violence of the attack, and a very respectable looking person, a distant relation, having come to nurse her, Lettice felt that she was not needed ; and after a short visit she was going to slip out unperceived, when she found Charles Denman at her side, and no entreaties would persuade him to leave her to go home, even this short distance, unprotected. Besides, he wanted to thank her for her sympathy, and to pour out his grief and anxiety about his sister to one whom he knew would understand him, and in the most earnest conversation they reached Mr. Malcolm's door, where they parted.

The next day Ellen was still very ill, as a heartbroken note from Charles informed her, and Lettice remained very anxious. On the following one there was a slight improvement, and Lettice, who had informed her mistress of her previous visit, hoped to make another, as Mrs. Malcolm was again going out. During the day, in arranging her mistress's dress, she suddenly remembered the key of the jewel case, and the sapphires still not put away. Shocked at her own carelessness, she went at once to her mistress, who was busy with Japan-work in the drawing-room, and asked her for the key.

"How you frightened me, Lettice," said Mrs. Malcolm ;
"your face was so scared ; I thought something terrible

had happened. The key of my jewel-case. No ; I gave it to you on Tuesday, and you did not return it to me. Very careless of you, indeed."

"I am afraid that I have been very careless, ma'am," said Lettice, "for I cannot find it anywhere. The sapphires I left in the wardrobe."

"Very negligent of you, indeed, Lettice," said her mistress ; "you don't consider the great value of some of my jewels. My wedding presents were far handsomer than my sister's—Lady Eleanor—and I have especially desired you always to return the key to me ; I shall never be able to trust you again. Bring me the sapphires at once, and I will put them myself in a place of safety."

Lettice, in much trouble, retreated ; but she soon returned in more. "Oh, ma'am," she said, "have you moved them ? They are not there."

"What do you mean ?" exclaimed Mrs. Malcolm. "I moved them, you impertinent creature. Let me see. Where is Max ? Of course he is not in. You do not say that my sapphires are lost ?"

As she spoke in this incoherent manner, Mrs. Malcolm rushed upstairs, where the open drawer showed the unsuccessfulness of Lettice's search. In the midst of scolding and dismay she desired Lettice to look in every other drawer, and on the shelves, helping herself and throwing her properties about in wild confusion. But all in vain. Lettice, pale as death, had endeavoured to express her sorrow ; but was told to hold her tongue, and in the midst Mr. Malcolm, who had just returned to luncheon, was heard calling "Gertrude," impatiently.

"There he is ; call him. No, I will go myself," and meeting him upon the stairs, she quickly told her

husband the state of affairs, and brought him into the room, where Lettice with trembling fingers was folding up a shawl.

"Call the other servants," said he in a judicial kind of way, after he had heard Lettice's faltering tale.

Mrs. Malcolm's bell rung violently, brought up William and he fetched the cook. To their master's questioning, they both replied that they knew nothing about the jewels. They knew that Lettice had gone out that night, but Evans herself had never stirred from the kitchen, and all being quiet and fastened up, she was positive that no one could have entered the house without her knowing it.

"But it is not impossible, sir," continued the cook, "that the young man as Lettice was walking with that night, may know something more nor I do. I don't want to take away a fellow servant's character, but she is unused in London ways, and I know how young men such as him, can persuade young women to do anything. When I lived with Colonel Peters——"

"We don't want to hear any of your experiences," said her master, interrupting her. "I knew how it would be, Gertrude, he added, turning to his wife, your trusting a girl like that with all your things. All her nonsense about church and pretence at goodness might have warned you. They are always the worst. Go and fetch a policeman, William, to inquire into the matter."

Lettice clasped her hands. "Oh, sir," she said, "what do you suspect me of? I have been very careless, but all I have told my mistress is true. I put the sapphires in *that* drawer, and I have never seen them since."

"I believe her, Max," said Mrs. Malcolm. "She has

been abominably careless, but I am sure she is not dishonest. I wish you would not frighten her with a policeman."

"I suppose you would like a chance of getting your sapphires back again," said Mr. Malcolm, coolly. "You had better not interfere, my dear."

Mrs. Malcolm did not say much more, but Lettice's glance of deep gratitude for her confidence confirmed her own opinion, and from that moment she showed nothing but kindness to the poor girl.

William was not long in bringing a policeman, and then a regular inquiry into the facts was instituted. There appeared to be enough suspicion to justify a search. That, however, did not trouble Lettice, more than the shame of having her properties turned over for such a cause; she accompanied the officer and directed him whilst he examined all her drawers. It was impossible not to be struck with the neatness and propriety of all arrangements, whilst the carefully treasured Bible, Prayer-book, and those Miss Amy had bequeathed to her seemed to point the owner out as a person of superior character. The policeman, like too many of his class, was unfortunately too much bent upon making a case of it, or he must have perceived that Lettice in her manner and appearance was no more like a guilty person, than her possessions seemed to belong to such a one.

The officer had completed his search, and Lettice was wondering what would be done next, when he inquired, as if for a mere form, whether there was anything else belonging to the young woman. Lettice said, "No, you have searched every place of mine," and the cook said, "Now, I suppose, sir, you'll like to begin of mine, I'm

sure you're welcome. You may begin with my jacket hanging up there. Oh, no, I ask your pardon, that is Miss Moden's jacket, I put mine away, I remember now."

"If this belongs to the young woman, sir," said the policeman, turning to Mr. Malcolm, who in his curiosity had accompanied the policeman, "I had better search it, too." As he spoke he took down the garment from the nail upon which it had been hung, and giving it a knowing kind of shake, as much as to say, "Now we've got it," he pulled out of one of the deep pockets a brown paper parcel, addressed to "Mr. Charles Denman, E—— Street.

Lettice started as he read out the direction, and coloured deeply, "That is not mine, sir, who can have put it there?"

"Gently, young woman," said the officer. "Let us see what is inside, and then we can better judge."

He cut open the string, unfolded the paper, and there was the morocco case, lined with white velvet, in which lay the brilliant necklet, brooch and earrings that had been missing.

"Sir," said Lettice, with stern firmness, walking up to Mr. Malcolm; "I did not put that parcel there. I know nothing about it. I am innocent. God help me!" Her voice rather broke down with the last words; but she recovered herself again.

"A person who will betray her mistress's confidence will lie to conceal it. Take her into custody, policeman."

For a few moments Lettice's control gave way, and she wept convulsively, protesting her innocence, and calling upon some one to befriend her; but with a great effort *she regained* something like calmness, and prepared to



Lettice Moden in prison.—P. 397.

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obey the policeman, by putting on her bonnet and the unlucky jacket.

"That is right, my girl," said the policeman, himself rather touched. "We're only going to keep you safe, you know. If you can prove yourself innocent, you will be quite at liberty to do so. We must see about this young man, though, sir. It is awkward that the things should be directed to him, the same, your cook says, as she walked home with."

"You suspect him—Mr. Denman?" cried Lettice, in amazement. "He bears the highest character—ask every one. What! shall I have brought him into trouble, too?"

"Don't say anything to criminate yourself, young woman," said the officer. "You'd best go quiet now, and say nothing more. We'll look after him."

Half an hour later, and Lettice, Miss Amy's Lettice, was lodged in the cell of a common prison. How seemingly unfit an occupant for those bare unfurnished walls, with their grated window and heavy door, was Lettice, as she half knelt, half sat on the floor, beside her truckle bed, with her face buried in her hands. A fair, modest girl, in a black dress and neat white cuffs and collars, her light hair braided as smoothly as its wavy nature would allow, and none but honest thoughts in her bosom. Poor Lettice, it was a bitter, heavy trial. At first she had wept bitterly, then she cried out, "O God, help me! I have none other beside Thee;" and this she said again and again, until faith returned, and she could say, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him." Many times the bitterness of her grief returned, as she saw her good name dishonoured; her parents believing her a disgrace to them; herself, nay she knew not what might be

her fate ; and Charles Denman, oh, would he know ? what would he think of her ? Yes, these were heavy, grievous thoughts, and as the darkness gathered round her, and the loneliness of her cell oppressed her with fears, again did the burden seem too heavy for her to bear ; but the Lord will never forsake His people, and by-and-by she was able to feel the presence of her Saviour, and the darkness was lightened to her, until she could sleep in peace. The voice of prayer and even of praise sanctified those miserable walls, until the spirit of the martyrs of old filled the young girl, and she said, " I will both do and suffer Thy will, O Lord." And through that long night she slept like a little child.

When the turnkey's wife came to attend upon her in the morning, she was astonished with the sad but calm demeanour of her prisoner, and, being drawn towards her, every favour she could grant was accorded to her. She asked if Lettice would like to send to any friends ; but, alas ! who could she summon ? She had but one, and he was perhaps bound to Ellen's sick-bed, and if not, how could she draw him into her troubles ? She dreaded his even hearing of them, and the threat of the policeman made her shrink with horror. So she only said she would consider about it, for the thought of Nurse Atkins had crossed her mind. Of her parents she could not bear to think, and the expense it might cause her father would have made her hesitate, had there been no other reason.

These things and many others she revolved in her mind, as she paced backwards and forwards in her cell, trying by every means to preserve her composure, and sadly *dreading* a return of the horror and fear that had *overwhelmed* her the night before. Her thoughts would run

so quickly from one thing to another ; she could fancy herself again a little child at school ; she seemed once more to be present at Miss Amy's christening ; she thought of that robe of righteousness, in which Miss Amy had been wrapt until her dying hour ; then she saw herself at the Hall, in all her wilfulness and undisciplined passions, and she thought—"This is good for me ; perhaps, without this sad trial, I might have become what I was before." Then she lost herself in thinking of her sweet mistress, her patience, her kind love for her servant, and she longed to be like her—yes, like her—in having been set free from the toils and troubles of this life, and safe in the Haven of Rest, the Heavenly Canaan.

So absorbed was poor Lettice in these thoughts that she had not noticed the approach of footsteps, nor was it until the bolts were drawn back, and the heavy door turned on its hinges, that she turned round, and saw, what seemed to make her heart stop beating, Charles Denman, who stood for a moment regarding her with the most profound respect and sympathy. The warder was close behind him, but retreated for a while, and then Charles came forward and said,—“Miss Moden—Lettice—may I call you so?—come away with me. Do not stay another moment in a place so unfitted for you.”

“How can I?” said Lettice, eagerly taking the hand he stretched out to her, whilst a flood of tears rushed to her eyes. “Perhaps, you do not know. I am supposed to be a thief. Why do such as you come near me?”

“Do you think I should not have come anyhow?” said Denman. “But, Lettice, it is good news I have brought you. You are cleared of the foul charge that none but idiots could have thought of fixing upon you. Come, do

not delay a moment. A cab is at the door. Ellen is waiting for you. Come, Lettice."

Very different from the young man's usual self-contained manner was the rapid way in which he poured out these words, and held out his hand as if to point the way to Lettice; and she, recovering her self-command, appeared the calmer of the two, as without asking more, she left the cell, and went to the turnkey's room, where she received her out-door clothes, and was handed to the cab.

"Drive as quickly as you can to 13, E—— Street," said Denman, and then getting in beside her, he began at once to relieve her bewildering anxiety, by detailing how this strange reverse in her affairs had taken place.

It appeared that the sad incident at Mr. Malcolm's had been bruited about almost immediately; the entrance of the policeman, and Lettice's going away with him had been known almost immediately, and a servant coming with a butter order from one of the neighbouring houses, had taken a pleasure in detailing all, and more than she knew. Charles Denman had been almost wild with indignation; never for one second had he been tempted to waver in his account, the policeman came to make inquiries, but Charles was off, he had gone at once to Mr. Malcolm's and demanded to see that gentleman. He was at that moment particularly engaged. Evans was much mistaken when she thought that, Lettice once got rid of, she should be able to run to any length whilst she stayed. As soon as Lettice had left the house, the master began to make a search on his own account, no corner escaped him, and *he found* enough to make him believe that Evans was at *least* no better than the one who had gone. Charles Denman came when he was in the midst of his indignation,

and although Mr. Malcolm would have nothing to say to him, he heard enough to give him the cue how to act. He never went to bed ; all the night he was searching about to bring the wickedness of Evans back to her, and by next morning he had heard enough of her ill-doings to be able to go to her and threaten instant exposure unless she would confess in what manner she had brought Lettice to this fearful position. The woman stood out for some time, but at last, awed by Denman's firmness, and the evidence he had ready, she confessed that she had stolen the sapphires, hid them in Lettice's jacket, and thrown suspicion upon her. This repeated before Mr. Malcolm, of course, caused the charge to be withdrawn, and Mrs. Malcolm had commissioned Denman to express their regret and to say that their house was open to her as soon as she would return. " But that cannot be as yet," continued Charles, " Ellen wants you now ; you will not disappoint her ? "

What would Lettice not have done for the friends who had proved so true and kind ? She was soon by Ellen's bedside, rejoiced to find that although weak, she was decidedly on the way towards recovery, and her sweet, loving words were balm to the poor Lettice. And she needed it ; after the first excitement was over, her spirits sank with the reaction, and she became almost morbid in her feeling that the disgrace would never leave her of having been in prison.

As she sat after supper with her friend, the cousin having returned to Ellen's room, she betrayed this feeling. " She should dislike so much returning to Mrs. Malcolm's, and to go to another place, how could she without a character ? "

Even as she said so, she felt that she was giving way to discontent, and she looked up penitently with her truthful, clear blue eyes, as she might have looked at Mr. Price years ago. She met Charles Denman's gaze bent upon her with a peculiar expression, so that she looked down again and blushed.

"There is one place you might go to," he said, "where your character is gone before you. It is waiting for you, Lettice—longing for you. It shall be as peaceful as love and care can make it, and we would ask God's blessing to rest upon it. Will you come to this place, my love, my precious one—will you be my wife, Lettice?"

It was easy to see what answer Lettice had given to this, when she and Charles went up to Ellen's room, as happy as mutual love could make them. Lettice looked out for no other place, although she did go back to Mrs. Malcolm for a month or two, and from there she was married.

Their wedding trip was to Nurse Atkins's farm, to whom Lettice took the prettiest cap she could procure; and then they came back to their situation, as Charles often playfully called their home, and here they tried always to walk in the footsteps of their blessed Master, praying that like Him they might be ready to do or suffer according to the Will of God, knowing that in the path of Holiness alone could they find His blessing.

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